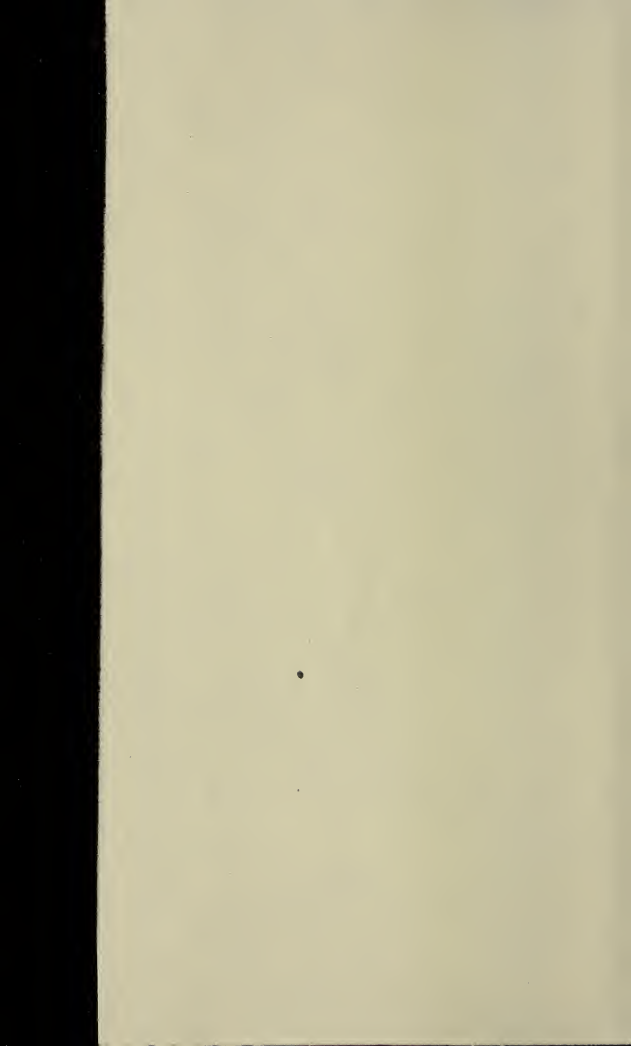


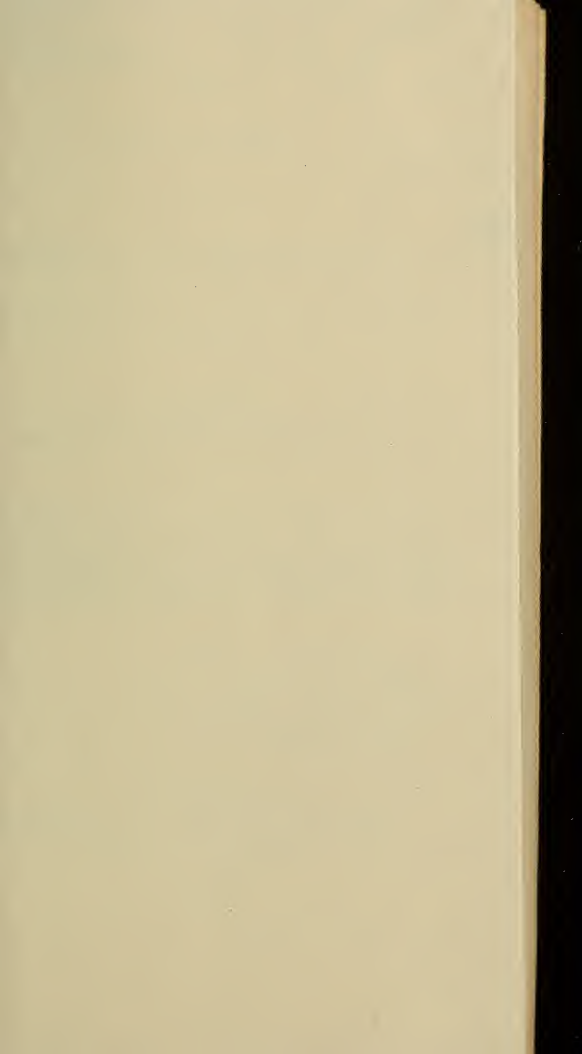
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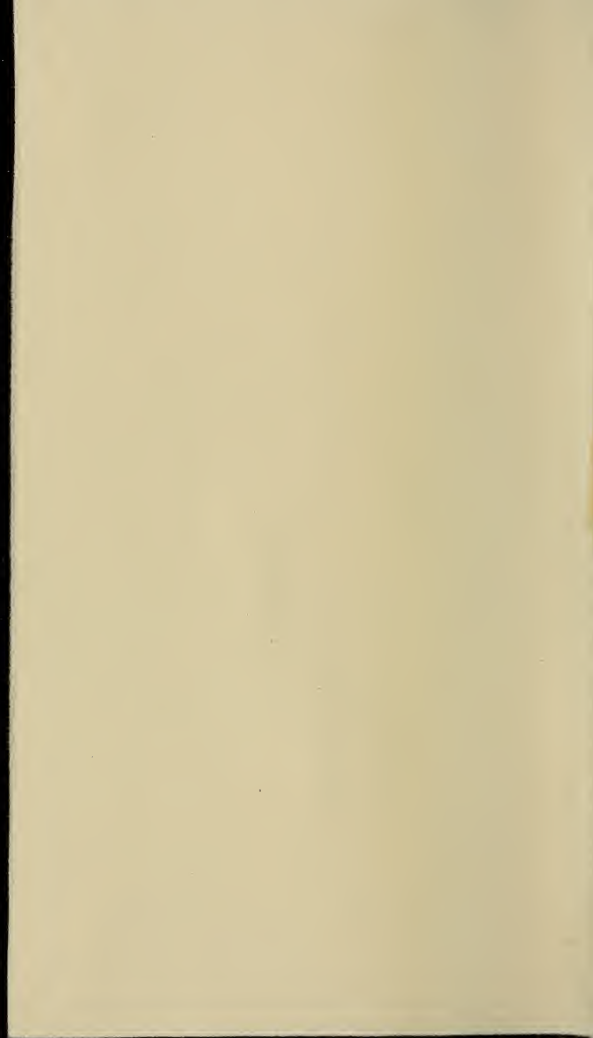
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EPITOME

OF THE

EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY;

DESIGNED FOR FAMILIES, SABBATH SCHOOLS, AND BIBLE
CLASSES.

BY CYRUS MANN,

Pastor of the Congregational Church in Westminster, Mass.

"Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word."—*Psalmist.*

"Every man residing in a Christian country will acknowledge (unless he have an end to answer in saying otherwise) that those people who read the Bible, believe its doctrines, and endeavor to form their lives by its precepts, are the most sober, upright, and useful members of the community; and that those, on the other hand, who discredit the Bible, and renounce it as the rule of their lives, are, generally speaking, addicted to the grossest vices."—*Horne.*

SECOND EDITION.

BOSTON:

PRINTED BY T. R. MARVIN, FOR THE
MASSACHUSETTS SABBATH SCHOOL UNION.

Depository, No. 47, Cornhill.

1831.

BT1101
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Entered according to act of Congress, in the year 1831,
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PREFACE.

TO PARENTS.

To the benevolent mind the numerous and successful efforts which are now making to instruct the rising generation must afford occasion of gratitude and joy. That they who are soon to fill the places of their fathers ; to inherit their estates, and wield the destinies of their country ; to frame its laws, and preside in its courts of justice ; to sustain and carry forward its civil, literary, and religious institutions ; that they should be enlightened, and trained to virtuous habits and correct sentiments, is an object of transcendent importance. Whether we consider their own happiness as rational, immortal beings, or the influence they will exert on the present generation, and in deciding the condition of the millions who are to succeed them, the prospect is almost overwhelming. In the neglect or instruction of those in early life we are digging the graves of our liberties, and extinguishing the light of heaven which shines upon our land, or giving stability to our invaluable institutions, and ushering in the morning which shall shine brighter and brighter until the day of millennial glory.

Education alone will not save the country from ruin, nor the soul from death. Perverted talents and learning become the most dreadful engines of corruption and infidelity, and the surest steps to anarchy and despotism. Education must be sanctified and directed by the Word of God, or its most desirable and happy results will never be experienced. Those who oppose the religious instruction of youth are opposing the means of their own safety; they are throwing away the only shield which can defend them against a host of malignant passions, and enable them to repose without fear of the robber and midnight assassin. Remove the restraints of religion, and what can effectually check the hand of violence? What can set bounds to the flood of crimes, ready to deluge society? What can elicit truth in courts of justice? What can awaken in the young a dread of those secret acts of guilt which no eye, except that of Jehovah, can witness? Cases occur every day and hour which no human laws can reach, and on which there must be laid a restraining power, or society becomes a curse instead of a blessing. These cases can be met and remedied only by the all-pervading influence of religion, carrying its sanctions home to the heart and conscience, and saying to the offender, whether young or old, that however he may escape a human tribunal, he shall not escape the just reward of his iniquity at the tribunal of heaven.

And if religion is necessary to prepare youth for usefulness in civil society, much more is it to fit them to live under the moral government of their Creator. What is to give vigor and energy to their moral faculties—to awaken conscience to a faithful discharge of its office—to raise the affections

to the Supreme Good—and engage all the powers in the service of God? Will mere science ever produce these desirable and important effects? will it soften and subdue the heart, and diffuse the love of God through the soul? will it bring the sinner into subjection to Christ, transform him into the image of his Maker, and impart that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord? Oh, no! the highest culture in human science has never afforded these blessed results. You may lead your children through academic groves, and teach them with Newton to investigate every law of nature, and measure every planetary orbit; or with Franklin to direct the lightning in its course; or with Stewart and Locke to develop all the powers of mind; and if they are untaught and unsanctified by the sacred oracles, they will still be enemies to God by wicked works. They will be in a perishing condition for want of that knowledge and wisdom which come from above, and conduct to eternal life. Where then is the patriotism—to say nothing of the piety—of those who are continually neglecting or opposing efforts for communicating a knowledge of the scriptures to the rising generation?

Has not the spirit of infidelity gone abroad in the land, and are not attempts to diffuse it still wider, continually made in the sneers, and cavils, and insinuations, designed to bring reproach and contempt upon the great doctrines of revelation? Have not many renounced all confidence in the Bible? If they profess some regard for its sacred truths, is it not that they may more effectually carry on their secret operations against all vital piety? Exposed to their influence, how many children of pious parents have grown up, not only in the neglect of religion, but its open and avowed enemies! They

listened to the conversation of the artful and designing, and, ere the parent was aware, they had made alarming and fearful strides in the road to infidelity. Its odious principles, instilled into their unsanctified hearts, like sparks of fire upon tinder, caught quick and spread rapidly. Without examination, the youth is corrupted and undone. He yields to prejudice, and relinquishes all reverence for the bible, and the truths it inculcates. Family prayer becomes irksome, and the froward child refuses to come to the domestic altar, or approaches it with manifest disgust. The parent's heart is wrung with inconsolable anguish at witnessing this progress of declension in a beloved offspring, until he has yielded to the unlimited control of the depraved passions, and given himself to work all manner of iniquity with greediness.

How shall this alarming evil, which has so often sent mourning into the habitations of the just, be averted? How shall future victims be rescued from the jaws of death? Furnish the young with the evidences which should support their confidence in the truth and inspiration of the scriptures. Fortify their minds against the assaults of unbelief by proofs adapted to their comprehension, and lead them to believe from knowledge and conviction. Let them see the immoveable basis on which faith rests, and they will not be easily led away with the error of the wicked. Going abroad into the world, they will not be ridiculed out of their respect for revelation. They will know in whom they have believed, and why they have believed, and will hold fast their faith without wavering.

Some, indeed, pretend to let their children choose for themselves in religion. They will give them no instruction on this subject, lest they should bias the

youthful mind. But they forget that their own examples are constantly exerting an influence in opposition to piety; that they are daily saying, by their conduct, It is no harm to treat the scriptures with neglect and contempt. Instead of obeying the commands of God, "Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children," "Train up a child in the way he should go," "Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,"—instead of this, these persons suffer their children to grow up like the "wild ass's colt," and are preparing to turn out upon society the most deadly enemies to all religion. Is it not an established fact, that the natural heart, left uncultivated and destitute of religious knowledge, is prepared for the reception of every prevailing, fatal error; that unless youth are taught the fear of the Lord, and a reverence for his word, they usually become despisers of the divine authority, profane scoffers, or stupid and hardened unbelievers?

Would you be faithful to those whom Providence has intrusted to your care, and rid yourselves of the blood of their souls, treat them as immortal, accountable beings; instruct them in the book of God, and show them the evidences of its divine authority; wrestle in prayer for them with Him who has said, "I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring." Let not your solicitude for them abate until they are created anew in Christ Jesus. How utterly does he fail of discharging the duties of a parent who provides only for a few years which are as nothing, and neglects that immortality which is all; who trains his children to stations of worldly profit or honor merely, and consigns them to misery during all the periods of their future existence.

Scarcely less deficient in duty would he be who

should teach only the evidences of Christianity. This is but one step in promoting youthful piety, though an essential one, without which fervent prayer and unwearied assiduity in inculcating the truths of the gospel will be likely to prove ineffectual. But perhaps you are too little acquainted with these evidences to communicate them to your children, and see no method of acquiring a knowledge of these subjects. The excellent books in which they are discussed you may deem too large for your perusal, or too expensive for you to purchase. If so, the little treatise which is here presented you, it is believed, will afford important aid. It is not designed as a substitute for more valuable and extensive works, but as a partial supply where there is an entire deficiency. It is so small that all the leading points of proof may be readily committed to memory, and that it may easily find its way into every family.

It may serve as a Text Book for a few recitations at the commencement of Bible classes, and may be beneficial to many of the older scholars in Sabbath schools.

Little more has been attempted upon the genuineness and authenticity of the scriptures than to give a short epitome of larger works. The writer would rejoice to have every family furnished with Horne's Introduction, Paley's Evidences, Erskine's Remarks, and Leslie's Short Method with the Deists. But while these and similar publications are seldom, if ever, read until the sentiments are established, and have assumed an inflexibility which will yield to no arguments, this little volume may be perused by a child, and should his heart be subdued by the grace of God, may assist in giving a reason of the hope which is in him. That all

parents may be faithful to the immortal beings whom heaven has committed to their charge ; that all our youth may be taught of God, and become living stones in his spiritual temple ; is the fervent prayer of the writer. He will feel richly rewarded for the labor bestowed on the following pages, should they be the means of guarding any against the seductions of error, or confirming them in the *faith once delivered to the saints*,



☞ This Edition has been corrected and enlarged. Questions have been added, at the bottom of the page, to facilitate the use of this little manual in Bible classes, and families. To these questions, many others may be added by the teacher, who should be able to give further explanations and proofs, too numerous to be crowded into this volume without destroying its object.



DISCOURSE I.

DUTY OF EXAMINING THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

2 PETER, i. 16. For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty.

THESE are the words of a disciple just before he suffered martyrdom. Christ had informed him that he “must shortly put off this tabernacle,” or in other words, that he would be put to death, because he had firmly believed, and zealously endeavored to propagate, the gospel. Had he acted the part of an impostor, now was the time for him to recant. Now the terrors of an ignominious and painful death were set before him, and he saw that he could have no earthly object to gain by continuing to follow Christ and adhere to his truth. Every thing seemed to

When did Peter write his second Epistle? What is it to suffer martyrdom? At what time and place, and in what manner was Peter put to death? [*Ans.* A. D. 66, at Rome; he was crucified with his head downward, at his request, for he thought himself unworthy to die in the same position with Christ.] What would he have done had he been an impostor? Why would he have renounced the gospel?

urge him to renounce the cause of the Saviour. And what was his conduct in this critical period? Does he manifest any hesitancy respecting the divine authority of the instructions he had delivered, or any misgivings of conscience for having published them? Far otherwise. "I will endeavor," says he, "that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance." He was confident that he and the other apostles and disciples of Christ had not followed cunningly devised fables in believing, and laboring to spread, the gospel. What a proof did Peter give of his sincerity and firm belief in Christ. He is not only ready but actually goes with his Lord to prison and to death. Can you avoid the conviction that such a man must have spoken the truth?

All the apostles knew they had not followed cunningly devised fables, for they were eye-witnesses of what they related. They had seen the miracles of Christ; had listened to his instructions; had beheld the glory which shone around him on the mount of transfiguration; had been knowing to his resurrection and triumphant ascension; to the gift of the Holy

Of what was Peter confident? How did the apostles know, they had not followed cunningly devised fables?

Ghost on the day of Pentecost—and that his gospel was the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation.

The scriptures demand attention, for they are a light shining in a dark world. They ought to be studied until the Holy Spirit has opened to your view their glory and excellence, and caused the day of heavenly grace to dawn in your minds.

Many give a loose and general assent to the truth of the bible, and condemn themselves by the little regard they pay to its precepts and its doctrines. Many suffer themselves to doubt whether this be the book of God, and whether they are bound to receive it as the arbiter of life or death to the human family. Many begin in their early days to rely with more confidence on their own opinions, formed without examination under all the bias of a depraved heart, than upon any declarations contained in the sacred scriptures. And how few study the evidences of the truth and inspiration of the bible with the diligence and the intense interest their im-

What is the great end to be desired and sought in studying the sacred scriptures? How do many conduct with respect to the evidences of their inspiration?

portance demands. If religion is anything it is every thing. If God has spoken to us in his word, and given us a revelation of his will, and we pay no regard to it, we are guilty of the highest possible irreverence, and may justly expect his severest displeasure.

My young friends, has your confidence been established in the truth of the scriptures? Have you received them as the word of God? If not, and you still continue to withhold your cordial belief in the sacred oracles, the instructions of the Sabbath school and Bible class, and all the other means of grace, will probably do you but little good. If you have never had any doubts respecting the divine origin of the scriptures, it is important to know why you believe them to be a communication from the Most High. You will then hear me attentively, while I present *some motives for diligently studying the evidences in favor of the truth and inspiration of the scriptures.*

1. You should study these evidences early and diligently, because of the numerous temptations to which you are exposed. The natural heart is full of unbelief, which begins to mani-

Of what are they guilty, and what may they justly expect?

fest itself with the earliest dawning of reason. The self-abasing truths of the gospel, and the holy duties it enjoins, usually appear forbidding to youth, and they are powerfully tempted to reject its messages. If you credit implicitly the word of the Lord, and yield to its influence, you must relinquish many of your vain pleasures. You must quit your merriment, and the society of the profane and dissolute with whom you have perhaps begun to be associated, and must often endure reproach and shame for the sake of Christ. The difficulties in the way of piety appear too formidable, and you are ready, without examination, to withhold your confidence from the bible. The path of irreligion and impiety appears the most smooth and easy, and altogether the most delightful, and your inclinations prompt you to choose it without regard to consequences.

You are disposed to listen to every thing which encourages you in the way you love to pursue. You hear numbers caviling at the scriptures, throwing out insinuations against the

What is the first reason offered, why these evidences should be studied early and diligently? Why are the young so much exposed to temptation? What do the scriptures require youth to relinquish?

facts they contain, or the doctrines they inculcate. Although the present is an age of religious enterprise, and of marvellous grace, it is likewise an age of infidelity. The poison is presented in every shape which is capable of alluring and captivating the unwary. It meets the young and inexperienced in newspapers, poems, and travels, in books of science and philosophy, and in the school books, the calendar, and the anti-religious tract. All these, and numerous other temptations of continual occurrence, fall in with the bias of every unrenewed heart. Without early and diligently studying the truth of the scriptures, the young will inevitably be overcome with the error of the wicked. They will become more hardened in unbelief with increasing years. They will yield to temptation, and leave the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness. Will you not then seasonably and earnestly apply yourselves to a candid investigation of the evidences which should confirm your belief in the word of God?

2. Be persuaded to do this, that you may be

What hinders a compliance with these requisitions? What will probably be the consequences of neglecting early to study the truth of the scriptures?

able to answer those who represent the scriptures as of no authority.

The young must be armed against the attacks which will be made upon them by the cavils of unbelief. Like Elisha, they must be able to show that they have something to speak on God's behalf. Without the means of defending their belief, they will be confounded and put to shame by those who are uninformed, and who have rejected the truth from mere ignorance. They will be like a city without walls, open to the incursions of the enemy from every quarter. They will be easily vanquished, and driven from the little confidence they may have imbibed in the sacred record. There is evidence abundantly sufficient to convince every candid mind that the Lord hath spoken to us in his word ; but he who has not investigated this evidence is in the same situation as though it did not exist. He is exposed to the unhappy consequences of denying the Lord who bought him, of making shipwreck of the faith, of dying without hope.

How important to be able early to wield the

In what respect should they resemble Elisha ? Why should they be able to defend their belief in the bible ?

weapons of defence, and wrest from the adversaries of our holy religion the deceitful armor wherein they trust. The youth, who has dared to appear in defence of that gospel which has been given to cheer and bless the world, has taken a noble stand. Heaven will smile on his efforts. His mind will be enriched from the treasures of wisdom, and it is no vision of the imagination to predict that he will become mighty in the scriptures and valiant for the truth.

Is it not the duty of all to be able to answer the objections of unbelief? Can any be strong in the faith, and give glory to God, unless they see the grounds on which they are resting their hopes? The believer has indeed an evidence within himself, paramount to all others, of the truth of the bible. It has given him a knowledge of his own heart, has shown him his guilt, subdued his pride, and produced a great and happy change in his feelings, desires, and pursuits. A book which could produce these effects, he is sure must come from God, for he only could search the heart, and reveal the glories of the divine character. This kind of

What evidence has the believer, which others do not possess, that this book is inspired?

proof is satisfactory, and would be sufficient for the believer, were there no other. But he needs something more to enable him to defend the cause of Christ in an unbelieving world, and maintain the truth against all the attacks of its enemies. He must enter the field of investigation, and trace the luminous track of revelation in the history of the world, and the numerous branches of evidence by which it is confirmed and commended to the belief of all men. If all this is necessary for the established believer, how indispensable is it to the young adventurer, just entering upon the theatre of life. He must meet continually with secret and subtle, or with open and avowed, assaults upon the divine authority of the scriptures, with the ridicule and contempt cast on its distinguishing doctrines, and with efforts to exalt human reason above the authority of revelation. Let him apply himself diligently in examining the basis of the great charter of his hopes, lest he be carried away with the current of this world, and fall under the denunciation of the Most High, "If any man add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book; and if any man

Of what use is it to him to possess any further proof?

shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city."

3. The scriptures claim to have proceeded from God. They come to us with repeated assurances that they were given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It is written, "The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake, as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Agreeably to this is the divine declaration, "I have sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them." In Hebrews it is said, "God, who in sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son." Paul, writing to the Corinthians, says, "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." To Timothy he writes, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." John testifies in Revelation, "These things saith the faithful and true witness—I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you

What do the scriptures claim? Repeat some of the passages, where this claim is stated?

these things in the churches." Nothing is more evident than that the bible claims to be the book of God, and this circumstance demands an early and diligent examination of the proofs of its divine origin.

Were statutes and laws sent you purporting to come from the supreme authority of the land, and were their authority called in question, would you not deem yourself bound to examine the justice of their pretensions? Would you think it safe to treat them with indifference, or utter neglect, under the plea that you knew not whence they originated? Did they require of you a particular course of conduct, and particular feelings and sentiments towards the government under which you lived, would it be a sufficient excuse for neglecting all these requisitions, that you were never satisfied of their genuineness, and never took the trouble to examine their claims? And if such an excuse would be accepted by no human government on earth, can you expect that it would be accepted by the King of heaven? Will he suffer all his statutes

Were statutes put into your hands, purporting to come from your rulers, what examination would you make respecting them? Would it be a sufficient excuse for neglecting to do this, to pretend you did not believe they proceeded from the government?

and commands to be thus evaded by his intelligent creatures? Imagine to yourselves one arraigned before the judgment seat to give an account of the deeds done on earth. Hear the Judge interrogating him, Why did you not believe in the revelation which I gave you? Why did you not obey its commands, and submit your heart and life to its sacred influence?

Who will then be able to reply, There were indeed messages put into my hand, which claimed to come from Jehovah, and demanded a voluntary surrender of his rebellious subjects to him, and obedience to his will: but I never believed that these messages proceeded from such high authority; I thought them the work of human invention, and not worthy of my obedience. Will any one dare offer such a plea before his omniscient Creator and Judge? Should he do it, would not his mouth be instantly shut by the inquiry, Why did you not examine the authority of the record which you rejected? You knew its high claims to your attention. Why were you not all engaged to

Will this excuse answer for neglecting to examine the truth of the scriptures? What may we suppose the final Judge will say to those who have neglected this duty? Will they be able to make any reply, or if they should, what will justly be said to them?

learn whether it were genuine? Why did you not resort with candor and prayerfulness to every source of information afforded you, respecting the truth of what come to you with the seal of heaven upon it? Instead of this you have contemptuously slighted the testimony of the King of glory, and never taken the trouble to inquire whether he had indeed spoken to you. How justly will it then be said to the delinquent, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou oughtest to have spent thy life in searching for the origin of the record sent thee, and in complying with its directions. Thou shouldest have examined its truths to know whether they had not the stamp of divinity upon them, and whether they were not far above all which could ever proceed from human wisdom. Thou hast been an unprofitable servant, and shall be cast into outer darkness.

4. The transcendent importance of the subjects contained in the scriptures should lead us to study diligently the evidences of their truth and inspiration.

They are subjects of the deepest interest to every human being, subjects which, if there be

Repeat the fourth reason for attending to the duty under consideration.

any truth in them, are immeasurably the most important that can engage the attention of accountable creatures. We cannot be ignorant of them, nor can we be indifferent towards them, without the utmost danger, without putting to hazard more than all the treasures and honors of this life. The scriptures present subjects which are to control our affections and govern our whole conduct. They unfold the character and perfections of God, and the condition, duties, and prospects of men. We are here taught the measure of affection and veneration we are to cherish towards the great and holy Being who made us, and by whose constant visitation we are preserved. In the scriptures we learn the rectitude in which man was first created, his apostacy from his Maker, and the method devised for his recovery through a Redeemer. The office of the Holy Spirit is described, and the necessity of his renewing influence in reclaiming men to God is exhibited. We are presented with the perfect and infallible rules for the regulation of our affections and conduct to-

What is said of the importance of the subjects, presented in the bible? What do we hazard by indifference towards them? How ought they to affect us? Will you mention some of the most interesting of these subjects?

wards all our fellow-men, to love our neighbor as ourselves, and do by others as we would that they should do by us. The duties arising out of all the different relations in life, those of parents and children, masters and servants, magistrates and subjects, of friends and acquaintance, of the young and old, the rich and poor, are clearly defined. Above all, there is revealed in this book our immortality. We are assured that a state of eternal rewards or punishments awaits us, when we shall have done with the present life. A crown of glory, which fadeth not away, or "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power," shall be the portion of every individual. We shall rise to dwell with angels of light, or sink to abide with fiends forever.

And does not a book which reveals subjects of such deep and awful interest demand investigation? Were it merely possible that it might be true, no wise man would suffer it to remain a matter of doubt or uncertainty with him. He would not rest until he had explored its origin, and seen on what foundation he must repose for

What duties are here taught? What is said of a future state? Were it merely possible, that the bible might be true, what is the part of wisdom respecting it?

the bliss of eternity. You should do this early and diligently.

5. Because you need strong confidence in the scriptures. What, except the consolation and hope arising from a firm belief in the sacred record, can sustain the soul amidst the uncertainties of time, and the evils which befall us in this transitory life? What else can administer support in affliction, give relief under that sense of guilt which is sometimes ready to overwhelm the sinner, or sustain us in the dying hour? Look at one who, from a state of plenty and prosperity, has been suddenly precipitated into indigence and want. See him thrown upon the compassion of a pitiless and inhospitable world. Withering under the chilling hand of poverty, he is attacked by disease, and is compelled to languish day after day in view of the wants of a family, which he is unable to relieve. Does he not need strong confidence in the word of God; an unwavering reliance upon the promises given to the faithful; and upon the particular, wise, and holy providence taught in revelation? What can sustain his fainting spirit, unless he can

Why do we need strong confidence in the scriptures? At what seasons do we especially need this confidence?

trust in the Lord, and rely on the kind and gracious intimation, that all things shall work together for good to them who love God?

Take the case of the sinner, convinced of his deep and aggravated guilt, and anxiously inquiring what he must do to be saved. He feels that he has been guilty of immeasurable offence, and deserves to be cast off forever. He sees that vindictive justice is awake against him, and unless its demands be soon appeased, its sword must be bathed in his blood. Where shall he look for help? Which way shall he flee from infinite wrath? Does he not now stand in perishing need of evidence that the book is from God which invites him to Jesus for mercy, that it is indeed a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus has come into the world to save sinners, and that he is able to save them to the utmost who come unto God by him? Finding it worse than in vain to look to a finite arm for assistance, can anything be more desirable than the certainty of that promise of the Saviour, "Come unto me, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest?"

What are the feelings of the sinner, convinced of his guilt? Where can he find peace?

There only can he obtain consolation. Thousands have fled to this refuge, and they have found it a safe retreat from all their fears.

Go to the beds of the dying, and what can sustain them in that gloomy hour? What can bring them tidings from the shores of that eternity into which they are about to launch? What sun can illumine their path through the valley of death? It is the sun of righteousness, shining from the sacred page. A light here dawns upon the darkness of the grave. Tidings are brought from heaven, and communicated to a dying world. And do we not need strong confidence in these messages of mercy? Should we not be assured that we have not followed fables, when we have trusted in Christ, that he will keep that which is committed to him, and raise it up at the last day? Examine then the truth and inspiration of the record which testifies of the Saviour. Learn early and seasonably on what the pillars of your hope must rest, that it may be as the house built on the rock, amidst the pains and anxious forebodings of dissolving nature.

What information do the dying need, and where can this be found?

How unwise are they who venture forward in life without settling with themselves the all-important question, whether the bible be the book of God. They commit themselves to the wide ocean, without a compass or a pilot to direct their course. They are driven at the mercy of every wind and wave, and no wonder if they are soon wrecked and lost. They reject the shield of faith, enter the territory of the enemy, and are vanquished at his pleasure. What can exceed the folly of those who, finding themselves beset with temptations, in imminent danger from their own corrupt passions, and exposed continually to the arrests of death, still persist in the neglect of the only means of safety? May I not hope that you who are commencing your career in life will begin by diligently and prayerfully inquiring into the divine authority of the scriptures; and, having found that they are from God, will yield your hearts to the influence of the truths inculcated. O do not, like Esau, despise your birth-right; lest like him you find no place for repentance, though it be sought carefully with tears.

What do they, who neglect to examine, whether the bible be from God?

How inconsistent is the general conduct of men in their treatment of the sacred scriptures. How reluctant are multitudes to devote a scanty pittance of time to hearing or examining the truths of the bible, and the evidence that it is a message from God unto them. They dare not conclude that it is not from him, such are the intuitive marks of divinity which it bears, and so forcibly does it commend itself to their conscience. But they content themselves with an indecision on this momentous subject, which will not alarm their fears nor disturb their slumbers. They wish to come to no conclusion, for if they do, it must be in favor of the truth of the divine oracles, and this once settled, all their vain dreams of security in sin are forever at an end. They have a work to do which must be done speedily, or nothing awaits them but a miserable eternity. The bible asserts, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

How do multitudes content themselves in this neglect? Why do they wish to continue undecided on this subject? If the scriptures are from God, what important results must follow?

The dread of admitting declarations like these, in all their force, has led many, it is to be feared, to suspend an acknowledgment of the divine authority of the scriptures. When they are admitted to be the word of God, there is no more resting in a slender morality, which leaves Jehovah and all the duties of piety out of question; there is no more depending for acceptance on a pretended doing as well as we know how, while we live in the total neglect of all the conditions of salvation described in the gospel. Granting that the scriptures are given by inspiration of God, there is absolutely no hope for any sinner, except in becoming a new creature in Christ Jesus.

In short, we may arrive at certainty respecting the truth of the scriptures. This subject is not attended with the difficulties which sometimes embarrass religious experience. A deceitful heart hinders multitudes from obtaining a knowledge of themselves. Others may discover so much remaining corruption in themselves, may find so little love to Christ, so much coldness in duty, and so many wanderings from God, that they can scarcely decide whether they are the friends or the enemies of the Redeemer.

But the truth of scripture is easily known and read of all men. It is founded on facts which are open to investigation. The apostles were confident, "We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. We know in whom we have believed—hereby we know, that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before God." If they could obtain certainty, much more may we; for we have all the evidence which they possessed, together with all which has accumulated by the power and efficacy of the gospel through succeeding ages. Were we compelled to go the world over, and spend all our days in this examination, it were better to commence the undertaking immediately, than to leave the matter in uncertainty. Could we arrive only at *probability*, of what folly should we be guilty if we did not search for this as our life. How inexcusable then shall we be not to acquire an unwavering confidence. The honor of God, and our own

On what kind of evidence is the truth of the scriptures founded? Can we arrive at certainty respecting this subject? What do the apostles say in regard to it?

comfort and safety, require a vigorous faith. See that you take heed to the sure word of prophecy, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day-star arise in your hearts.

DISCOURSE II.



GENUINENESS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

LUKE i. 4. That thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed.

THIS sacred historian commences his gospel by saying that many had undertaken to write accounts of the new dispensation introduced by our Saviour. The extraordinary life and death of Christ, and the power and efficacy which had been given to his instructions, attracted the attention of great numbers, both Jews and heathen. Many uninspired men would naturally keep a record of remarkable events which transpired in their day. They were not, however, the favored instruments whom God had selected to transmit the history of Christ and the revelation of the divine will to posterity. Luke was well qualified for this important pur-

What effect had the extraordinary life and death of Christ? How was Luke well qualified to write the history of Christ? Did any others keep records of events mentioned in the gospel, and were they all inspired?

pose, having had a perfect understanding of all which related to the Saviour from the beginning. He inscribes his history to Theophilus, a man of rank and eminence in the church; with the express purpose that this distinguished person might know the certainty of those things relating to the gospel, of which he had already received some knowledge. Not less interesting to us, my young friends, is this certainty, than it was to the illustrious personage of whom the apostle speaks. I shall, therefore, proceed to lay before you, in as plain and concise manner as possible, some of the evidences of the *genuineness*, *authenticity*, and *inspiration* of the Scriptures.

By their *genuineness* is meant that they are the real productions of the persons by whom they claim to have been written, and were actually penned at the time assigned to them.

Their *authenticity* implies that they relate facts which really happened, and are consequently entitled to entire credit.

By *inspiration* is intended that the writers were so assisted by the Spirit of God as to be preserved from error in their narrations, and so

To whom did Luke inscribe his history, and for what purpose? What is meant by the genuineness of the scriptures? What by their authenticity? What by their inspiration?

enlightened as to be able to communicate truths which could otherwise never have been known, and that they have written neither more nor less than it was the will of God should be revealed to men. All their writings are sanctioned by divine authority, and demand our implicit faith. Let us at present consider the *evidences of the genuineness of the sacred writings*.

I shall first notice those which respect the Old Testament. That the books of which this is composed were written by Moses and the prophets, and the authors to whom they are attributed, is evident from witnesses who possessed the means of knowing, and who could have had no inducement to impose on succeeding ages.

Books were of rare occurrence in the early periods of the world, when the scriptures began to be written. Those which did exist must have excited curiosity, and led to diligent inquiry respecting their authors. The scriptures were transcribed with great labor, and those who first performed this service must have

Repeat the names of the books in the Old Testament. Which of these compose the Pentateuch, and by whom were they written? How do we know the different parts of the Old Testament were written by Moses and the prophets, or persons to whom they are attributed? Were books common in those days?

known by whom, and at what time, they were composed.* The transcriber would naturally communicate this knowledge to his immediate descendants, and these again to others through succeeding generations. In this manner they have come down to us, and all those through whose hands they have passed testify that they are genuine.

God directed parents to be habitual and diligent in teaching their children the sacred writings, and no better method could have been devised for preserving a true account of their origin. They were held in the highest veneration among that very people whom they continually reprov'd and threatened for their sins, and who would never have transmitted such unfavorable accounts of themselves to pos-

How were they written? What effect would the great difficulty of writing them have upon the notoriety of their authors? What direction did God give to parents, and what influence would this have in preserving the origin of the scriptures? How were the Jews treated in these writings? Did they reject these books on that account?

* At that time the art of printing was unknown, and books, if they could be so called, were written on wood, wax, bark, or leaves of trees, and parchment made of skins. This last material was the most common. The parchment was written only on one side. A number of skins were sewed together and preserved in large rolls. This was the manner of writing at Babylon (Ezra vi. 1, 2); and in this way the scriptures appear to have been written. (Jer. xxxvi. 2, 6.) The ten commandments were inscribed on tables of stone.

terity, had the writings which contained them been spurious.

A particular tribe of the Hebrews was set apart, for the express purpose of preserving their scriptures, and performing the religious rites which these inculcated. So exact were they in maintaining the purity of their divine books, that they would suffer death rather than alter a single point or letter of them. Guarded with such care, it must have been almost impossible that the names of the authors should have been changed, or that the period assigned should have been any other than the true one.

Christ, who accused the Pharisees of making the law of no effect by their traditions, and who enjoined it upon men to search the scriptures, never intimated that they had been corrupted. This he would not have failed to do, had occasion required. Josephus, a learned Jew, who lived about the middle of the first century, says of the books of the Old Testament, "Five of them proceeded from Moses: they include as

What method was taken to preserve their scriptures? What is said of the care taken to guard against any alteration in these sacred records? How did Christ treat the Pharisees? What would he have done, had they altered, or corrupted their scriptures? Who was Josephus, and when did he live?

well the laws as an account of the creation of man, extending to the time of his (Moses') death. This period comprehends nearly three thousand years. From the death of Moses to that of Artaxerxes, who was king of Persia after Xerxes, the prophets, who succeeded Moses, committed to writing, in thirteen books, what was done in their days. The remaining four books contain Hymns to God (the Psalms) and instructions of life for man." This learned Jew ascribed all these books to the authors whose names they still retain.

Two hundred and eighty-two years before Christ, the Old Testament was translated into Greek at Alexandria. This translation was called the Septuagint, and here we find the same books, arranged in the same order, and ascribed to the same writers, as in our bibles. Consequently we have precisely the same writings which the ancient Jews declared to be genuine.

What does he say respecting the books of the Old Testament? What length of time is included in the writings of Moses, and what writers succeeded him? What does the testimony of Josephus prove? How long before Christ was the Old Testament translated into Greek, and at what place was this done? What was this translation called, and why was it so called? What books were included in this translation, and in what order were they arranged?

But notwithstanding these and many other proofs, the enemies of revelation, with a view to discredit the whole system of divine truth, have maintained that the Pentateuch, or five books ascribed to Moses, was not written by that legislator. Let us beware of those who by their subtlety would deprive us of the rich blessings which have resulted from the scriptures. That there is no reason for distrusting the interesting portion of them which has been named, I shall now endeavor to show.

A system of moral and ceremonial laws was established among the Israelites from the time of their departure from Egypt to their dispersion at the taking of Jerusalem. These laws were the basis of their political and religious institutions, and they were believed in every age to have proceeded from the hand of Moses. They were strictly enjoined upon the whole Jewish nation, who were made the depositories and keepers of them. "We are, therefore, reduced to this dilemma, to acknowledge either that these laws were actually delivered by Moses, or

Is this conclusive evidence, that the bible must have then existed, as we now have it? From what time had the Israelites a system of laws? Of what were these laws the basis? By whom were they believed to have been written?

that a whole nation, during fifteen hundred years, groaned under an imposture, without once detecting, or even suspecting, the fraud. The Athenians believed that their system of laws was composed by Solon, and the Spartans attributed theirs to Lycurgus, without ever being suspected of a mistake in their belief. Why then should it be doubted that the rules prescribed in the Pentateuch were given by Moses? To deny it is to assert that an effect may exist without a cause, or that a great and important revolution may take place without an agency. We have therefore an argument, little short of mathematical demonstration, that the substance of the Pentateuch proceeded from Moses; and that the very words were written by him is at least a moral certainty.”*

The same conclusion has been drawn from tracing the history of the Mosaic writings through the different periods in which they have been known to exist. We find them in the time of Christ, for he and his apostles fre-

What absurd conclusion follows, if we do not admit, that Moses delivered these laws? By whom did the Athenians and Spartans believe their system of laws composed? Was it scarcely possible they should mistake in this? and was it not equally impossible the Jews should mistake?

* Horne, vol. i. p. 52.

quently quote from them. We have seen that they existed and were translated nearly three hundred years before the advent of the Messiah. The Pentateuch was extant during the Jews' captivity at Babylon, five hundred and thirty-seven years before Christ, for it is mentioned by Daniel. We hear of it again in the time of Jehosaphat, king of Judah, who employed his princes, and with them sent priests and Levites, to publish the *book of the law of the Lord*, nine hundred twelve years before Christ. Solomon and David regulated the service of the tabernacle and the temple according to the worship prescribed by Moses in the Pentateuch. Still further back, Joshua bears testimony to the existence of the *book of the law* in his day. Thus he writes by divine authority: "Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do all according to the law, which Moses, my servant, commanded thee,—this book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth." Joshua was cotemporary with Moses, whom he survived. The Pentateuch is, therefore, undeniably the production of Moses.

Are the Mosaic writings known to have existed in the time of Christ, and how is this known? At what periods before this, are they known to have existed? What does Joshua say of the *book of the law*? What does this prove?

“This conclusion is confirmed by the testimony of heathen writers. Manetho, Justin, Tacitus, and Strabo, testify that Moses was the founder of the Jewish laws. Longinus and many others speak of him as the legislator of the Jews.”

Do any inquire whence Moses could have obtained materials for the history which he has given in Genesis? To this it may be replied, that if all scripture were given by inspiration of God, the same spirit of inspiration taught him which instructed all the other sacred writers. Beside this, the facts which he relates might have been easily transmitted to him by tradition. Enos, the son of Adam, lived until Noah was seventy-four years old. And Shem, the son of Noah, lived almost as long as Abraham. Thus the original revelation made to Adam, together with his history, could scarcely fail of being correctly handed down to the immediate progenitor of Moses. The same account might have been transmitted in another manner. Be-

What heathen writers testify, that Moses was the founder of the Jewish laws? How could Moses have obtained the information contained in Genesis? Mention some of the principal events contained in Genesis. How could the knowledge of these events have been preserved? What is the meaning of tradition? How many persons must have lived between Adam and Noah to transmit information from one to the other?

tween Adam and Noah but one man was necessary to the transmission of the history of 1656 years. Methusaleh, the grandfather of Noah, was born in the year of the world 687, and died in the year 1656, so that he lived to see both Adam and Lamech, and was likewise contemporary with Noah 600 years. Seth connected Noah and Abraham, having lived to converse with both; as also Isaac did with Abraham and Joseph. Hence, had the book of Genesis no other authority, except that of tradition, it would be better substantiated than the writings of the most reputable Greek and Latin historians."

Notwithstanding this abundant evidence, the genuineness of the Pentateuch has been called in question, because of expressions and passages in it which could not have been written by Moses. The account of his death at the close of these books, it has been said, could not have been written by him. But this may have been added by some later prophet, without in any

Who lived long enough to do this? Who connected Noah and Abraham? Who lived to converse with Abraham and Joseph? Had Genesis no authority, except that of tradition, how would it compare with the genuineness of Greek and Latin histories? How could the account of Moses' death have been written?

measure impairing the authority of the history to which it is attached.

It has been objected that the expression, "Now the man Moses was very meek above all the men which were upon the face of the earth," would not have been penned by him. But this passage might have been correctly translated, "Now the man Moses was depressed, or afflicted, more than any man." It might also have been introduced by some later prophet, who revered his memory, or Moses might have been "justified in inserting it by the occasion, which required him to repel a foul and envious aspersion of his character." Several other objections have been suggested, but they are of too trifling a nature to be noticed, or a sufficient reply readily suggests itself to those who are not determined, at all events, to reject the testimony of revelation.

How wonderful a book is the bible. It contains the most ancient writings of which we have any certain information. The pretensions of the Chinese to antiquity have long since been proved to be fabulous. No authentic history of

What may be said respecting the passage, "Now the man Moses was very meek," &c.? What book contains the most ancient writings? What is said of the pretensions of the Chinese to antiquity?

the Egyptians exists more ancient than Sesostris, who besieged Jerusalem in the fifth year of Rehoboam's reign. The Hindoos have no ancient history which is capable of affording a distinct account of their origin, or the events which have transpired among them. On the other hand, the scriptures can be clearly traced to their source. They were commenced in the early ages of the world by the inspired legislator of that people whom God had selected to be the depositories of his truth. With this people the bible continued to travel through all their sojournings from the foot of Sinai to the city of Jerusalem, and has descended with them through all their generations. The sublime truths it taught were related by fathers to their children; were bound as frontlets between their eyes; were written upon their gates and the posts of their doors; were statedly read before their assembled tribes and in their synagogues; and constituted the great charter of all their civil and religious privileges. The bible has employed the labors of prophets and kings, and touched their lips with holy fire; it has dwelt

What is said of the history of the Egyptians and of the Hindoos? How does the scripture history differ from theirs?

beside the ark of the covenant, and filled the ancient temple with the glory of the Lord.

It predicted and welcomed the coming of the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. It has embodied his instructions, and been sealed with his blood. Surviving the long ages of darkness, in which almost all human learning perished, it shed over the earth the light of the reformation in the sixteenth century, which continues to shine with increasing lustre in our day, and is destined to illuminate the world, and fill it with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover and fill the channels of the deep.

The bible has been translated into more languages, excited more inquiry and investigation, among friends and foes, and done more to improve the moral condition of the world, than all other writings. Its truths have possessed a wonderful efficacy in renovating the hearts of men, reforming their lives, and bringing them from infidel security and degrading vice to live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present evil world. Every man will be judged, and receive his award for eternity, according to the truths

What book has been translated into more languages than any other ?

and precepts of the bible. The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day, saith the Saviour. This is every way the most extraordinary book which has ever appeared on earth, and carries the image of its great and wise author impressed on its sacred pages.

How interesting and important a portion of revelation is the Old Testament. Here the cloud is taken up, and we see creation rising into order and beauty under the hand of Omnipotence. We hear the Almighty speaking the world into existence, and see him peopling it with a race of immortal beings. We are taught, what could be learned nowhere else, how man apostatized, and became a prey to sin and death. Early intimations of a Saviour bespeak the immense importance of faith in his atoning blood. The earth deluged for the wickedness of its inhabitants; the confusion of tongues at the building of Babel; the awful destruction of Sodom and the cities of the plain; teach us the evil of sin, and the reverence with which we must contemplate and approach the living God. In this

What circumstances render the Old Testament an interesting portion of scripture? Relate some of the principal events, which it records.

portion of scripture we are presented with the origin of the church in the family of Abraham, and trace, as on a map, its history down to the advent of the promised Messiah. Here too are spread before us the visions of the prophets, the devout strains of the sweet Psalmist of Israel, and the wisest sayings ever written for the regulation of human life. How presumptuous and arrogant are they who labor to discredit this portion of the sacred writings. Though the rites it inculcates have been superseded by the simplicity of the gospel, yet will it shed light on the path of the believer until the end of time. Wherefore, fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.

DISCOURSE III.

GENUINENESS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

LUKE i. 4. That thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed.

I SHALL now proceed to adduce some of the evidences of the genuineness of the New Testament. The uninterrupted testimony of ages now presents itself before us, and we are furnished with more abundant proof than can be found in favor of any other writings of antiquity.

My first argument is briefly this. The books of the New Testament have been quoted by a continued succession of writers, who all agree in attributing them to the authors whose names they now sustain. Take an illustration. Suppose the *Æneid* of Virgil and the Orations of Cicero had been quoted, from the period in which they were written down to the present day, and uniformly attributed to those distin-

State the argument used to prove the genuineness of the *New Testament*. How is it illustrated?

guished persons, could there be any doubt whether they in fact wrote the *Æneid* and the *Oration*s? Would it not be thought morally impossible that there should here be any mistake? This is precisely the evidence which exists in favor of the writings of the New Testament. Numerous quotations have been made from them in all succeeding periods. Clement, Ignatius, and Polycarp, who were acquainted with the apostles, and conversed with them, and who wrote in the age immediately following that of the apostles, quoted from their writings. They could not be deceived respecting the authors or the dates of the sacred books, and they referred them to the same we do now. About twenty years later, Justin Martyr abundantly cited the apostolic writings. Thirty years after him, Hegippus did the same. Irenæus was still more copious in his quotations. "If any modern divine should write a book upon the genuineness of the gospels, he could not assert it more expressly, or state their original more distinctly, than Irenæus hath done within little more than a hundred years after they were pub-

What early writers, acquainted with the apostles, quoted from the New Testament? What writers, at a later period? What length of time between them?

lished.”* Clement immediately succeeded, and was followed by Tertullian. Both these writers assert the universal reception of the gospels, and their antiquity. Dr. Lardner observes, respecting Tertullian, “that there are more and larger quotations of the small volume of the New Testament in this one Christian author, than there are of all the works of Cicero in writers of all characters for several ages.” The same kind of testimony is continued down through Origen, Cyprian, Arnobius, Lactantius, and Eusebius, until there can be no question on the subject; “quotations becoming as numerous as the references to scripture in the discourses of modern divines.” Were there no other proof, this alone would be sufficient to convince every candid mind.

But it may be further observed, that the books of the New Testament were early and frequently read in the churches, and acknowledged to be the writings of the apostles. To recur to the illustration before used. Suppose the works of

Repeat the remark of Dr. Lardner respecting Tertullian. Through what other writers is this testimony continued? How numerous did quotations finally become? What evidence of the genuineness of the New Testament, is derived from the practice of the churches? How is this explained?

* Dr. Paley,

Cicero and Virgil, soon after being published, had been introduced into seminaries of learning throughout the Roman empire, and the study of them had been deemed essential to a good education ; and suppose this had continued to be the case down to the present day, how is it possible that a mistake could have occurred respecting the authors of those writings. Or suppose Webster's spelling book should continue in general use for two centuries, or ten centuries to come, who would doubt at the end of that period whether he wrote this book ? If the New Testament was not read in schools, it was constantly read in the churches, and preserved by them with the utmost veneration. The epistles of Paul were directed to the churches which had been founded at Rome, Corinth, in Galatia, at Ephesus, Philippi, Colossé, Thessalonica, and to the Hebrews in general. All the epistles, together with the other books of the New Testament, were early and eagerly perused by large societies. A knowledge of them was deemed essential to present duty and final salvation. The practice of reading them publicly in the

To what churches were the epistles of Paul directed ? What was thought respecting a knowledge of these epistles ?

churches was universal for centuries. Who then can entertain a doubt respecting their origin? How certainly do we possess the true account of their authors and the time when they were written.

The Christian scriptures were soon collected into a volume, which was distinguished by appropriate titles. According to Ignatius and others, this was done previous to the close of the first century. From this period no alteration could have easily taken place in the names of the sacred writers; and previous to this, we approach too near the apostolic age to suppose an alteration practicable.

Catalogues and commentaries were early published, which show that there has been no changing of the authors to whom the different books of the New Testament are attributed.

Different sects appeared, professing Christianity, and all of them appealed to the same scriptures for the support of their respective opinions. They agreed in acknowledging the same writings genuine, and of paramount au-

Mention the books of the New Testament. When were these collected into a volume? Could any alteration have been made in the names of these books since that time? Were any catalogues of these books published, and when? How did different sects regard the scriptures?

thority. This would never have been done by disputants, differing essentially in their views of religious truth, had there been any doubt, or ground of debate, on this important point.

Another argument to be mentioned is, that translations of the New Testament were made in the second century, and in the course of one or two centuries more were greatly multiplied. At this early period the gospel was published in different languages, and circulated and read over three quarters of the then known world. The names of the writers, as we now have them, went along with the writings. From this time it is impossible that any alteration should have taken place; unless we suppose that men of different nations, sentiments, and languages, and often exceedingly hostile to each other, should all agree in one forgery. Such an event has never been known, and to suppose it to have taken place, is to suppose as great a miracle as any recorded in the bible. Let me explain.

Would they have agreed respecting them, had there been any doubt whether they were genuine? What is said of translations of the New Testament? What is meant by a translation? How early and extensively was the gospel published and read in different languages? What is necessary, in order that there should have been any alteration in the books of the N. T. after this time?

Grant that Addison's writings are now translated into the language of every civilized nation under the sun, and that they are every where ascribed to him. Can it be, without a miracle, that in one or two centuries his name should be erased from all these books, that all people should agree in attributing them to another author, and that no person existing should have any knowledge of this alteration? The event would contradict all the laws of human nature, as well as the uniform experience of ages. With greater propriety might we reject all the other writings in the world, and throw aside all human testimony, than deny the genuineness of the New Testament.

Even the enemies of Christianity have, undesignedly, furnished conclusive evidence on this subject. Celsus, a bitter opposer of religion, wrote in opposition to the Gospels, about one hundred years after they were published. He has consequently shown that there were such books at that time, and that they were received and credited by Christians. He makes no ob-

How is the difficulty of a forgery in the sacred writings illustrated by the writings of Addison? What absurdities would arise from rejecting the genuineness of the N. T.? What evidence have the enemies of Christianity furnished on this subject?

jection to their genuineness. This he would not have failed to do had he the least hope of doing it successfully. Porphyry wrote against the Christian religion in the third century. Supposing that to destroy the credit of the Gospels and Acts of the apostles would be destructive to Christianity, he directed his attacks against these, and has thereby shown their general reception in his day. A century later Julian, in his attack upon Christianity, calls the Gospels and Acts of the apostles by the names which we now give them. He expresses no doubt of their genuineness, but implies that he believed it fully established. Thus God has made the wrath of man to praise him, in causing the writers against Christianity to yield an unwilling testimony in its favor, and to aid in confirming the faith of believers down to the end of time.

How much reason have we to admire the divine goodness in preserving the scriptures, and furnishing such conclusive evidence in their favor. Time, the destroyer of all the works of men, has not obscured this celestial light. How

Who were some of their writers, and at what periods did they live? Why have we reason to admire the divine goodness in preserving the scriptures?

many cities and empires have gone down to oblivion, with all their once proud monuments of art, since the bible commenced its bright career. Who has survived to tell posterity the improvements, the splendor, the minute history of nations, which once filled the earth with their victories and the terror of their names? Dark ages have rolled over them, and covered them deep in obscurity, like the habitations buried beneath the eruptions of a burning mountain. Other inhabitants walk over the sepulchres of the dead, regardless of those who once peopled the places they now occupy. The scriptures have outlived all these ravages. They have arisen, like a Phœnix, from the ashes of Jerusalem and the tomb of departed nations.

They have survived, too, the rage of the most inveterate, the most potent enemies. Kings and emperors have set themselves to annihilate this holy book. They have decreed it to the flames, and made death the portion of any who should dare to preserve it in their houses. Still it lives. It lives to bless the world with heavenly light, to guide our feet in the way of peace

What has become of most of the other works of antiquity? What have the scriptures had opposed to them?

and salvation. What, except the immediate care of Jehovah, could have secured it from the wastes of time, and the fury of enemies. How much occasion have we for gratitude to God for affording us these lively oracles, for bringing them down to us from distant ages, to instruct us in our duties, to show us our condition of guilt and moral ruin by nature, and point us to the Lamb of God to take away our sin.

Careless youth, think how much you owe to the sacred scriptures. To them you are indebted for that parental care and tenderness which watched over your helpless infancy; for that solicitude which listened to your feeble cry, and hastened to relieve your every want. To the scriptures it is owing that you were not born in heathen lands, and sacrificed to the Moloch of superstition. The bible has given rise to all your means of mental and moral elevation; to all the sweet endearments of home and kindred; all that is most delightful in social intercourse; all just views of God and Christ, and the method of salvation. Learn then to prize this book above every earthly treasure.

Why have they not been utterly destroyed and lost? What do we owe to the scriptures?

It is of more value than rubies. Rely upon its truth with unwavering confidence. Pray that its spirit may be wrought into your minds, and its precepts may shape all your conduct. Awake from your indifference and stupidity before they have become riveted upon you, and your deliverance has become hopeless.

Thoughtful youth, meditate with increasing solemnity on the momentous truths of the bible. They will be the arbiters of your eternal state, awarding to you everlasting life or death according as you have improved or neglected them. Never suffer yourself to doubt whether God will be true to his word. Yield with implicit confidence to the terms of the gospel. Follow the Saviour whithersoever he leads, and "when this chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory, that fadeth not away."

How ought we to treat the scriptures?

DISCOURSE IV.

AUTHENTICITY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

JOHN iii. 11. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, we speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen, and ye receive not our witness.

HAVING attended to the genuineness of the sacred writings, I shall now proceed to state some of the evidences of their authenticity. A book may be genuine which is not authentic; or, in other words, the writers and the time when it was composed may be known, though it may not relate facts as they really happened. The authenticity of writings implies that the accounts they give are true; that they consequently possess authority, and ought to govern our belief. That this is the case with the scriptures appears,

1. From the consideration that those who have delivered them to us had a perfect know-

What is meant by the authenticity of writings? What is the difference between genuine and authentic? State the argument to prove, that the scriptures are authentic?

ledge of the subjects of which they have treated.

Christ asserts not merely of himself, but of the prophets, "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen." Christ is here speaking particularly of regeneration by the Holy Spirit. This subject had been clearly unfolded to the prophets. By them the Lord had testified to Israel, "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will cause you to walk in my statutes and keep my commandments." The chief desire of the Psalmist was, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." Every sacred writer knew assuredly, that without this change there could be nothing except a worthless form of religion; that there could be no spiritual worship, or holy affections. But the declaration of the Saviour admits of a more extensive application. It may imply that those who have delivered us a revelation had a thorough knowledge of all the subjects on which they have treated. Many of them were principal agents in carrying on the events recorded. Moses was the legislator and

What does Christ say of himself and the other sacred writers? How much does his declaration imply? What part did the writers take in the transactions they record?

governor of the Jews, and every thing was done under his eye. Joshua succeeded him in controlling the affairs of the nation. The book ascribed to him is little more than his own biography. The prophets were also judges of Israel, and chief actors in what they relate. The communications of God were made to them personally, and they are the proper witnesses of what they saw and heard, in supernatural appearances, and from the mouth of the Lord. They were present at the transactions recorded, and testified to what they had seen, or were taught by the spirit of inspiration. Public annals appear likewise to have been consulted, and are probably referred to in the mention made of the "book of the wars of the Lord," "the book of Jasher," and some others. The writings of all the prophets were published at a time when the facts could have been easily ascertained, and they never could have gained credit, had they not been true. But they were universally believed, and transmitted with the utmost care to posterity.

Give some account of Moses, and of Joshua. Had the prophets anything to do with the government of Israel? What sources of information had they? How were the communications of God made to them? At what time were the writings of the prophets published? How were these regarded?

The writers of the New Testament were either eye-witnesses of what they relate, or had the best means of knowing the truth. Matthew, John, Peter, James, and Jude, were all Jews, and resided at Jerusalem, where the gospel was first published. Paul was a native of Tarsus, but had lived a long time at Jerusalem, and acquired a knowledge of the Jewish religion, previously to his conversion. After this event, he was an associate with the apostles, and must have had an accurate account of all which respected the Saviour.* Mark, though not an apostle, wrote under the inspection of Peter, and his writings are consequently sanctioned by apostolic authority. Luke had the approbation of Paul, in composing his Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles. All these writers were cotemporary with the events of which they speak, and might justly say, "We testify that we do know,

To what nation did the writers of the N. T. belong? Where did they reside, and what advantage did their place of residence afford them? Of what city was Paul a native? What opportunity had he of acquiring a knowledge of the Saviour? Mention some evidence, that the writings of Mark and Luke are authentic.

* He was taught likewise from a higher source. He retired into Arabia, where he received the communications from the Lord Jesus, concerning which he says to the Galatians, "I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man; for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."

that we have seen." The witnesses are amply sufficient. No profane history, since the world began, has been so fully attested. The transactions related were public, and errors must have been immediately detected. "I spake openly to the world," saith Christ, "I ever taught in the synagogue and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort, and in secret have I said nothing." No attempt was ever made to contradict or refute the testimony of his disciples, even by his bitterest enemies, and we may conclude with certainty that they have published the truth.

2. The sacred writers had no motives for practising deception, nor could the histories they have recorded be the works of human invention. No impostors would ever have given men laws so holy, so excellent for the regulation of their conduct ; laws, which condemn the smallest sin, and even prohibit every evil thought and criminal desire. No deceiver would ever frame statutes, condemning all deception and falsehood,

What might these writers say of themselves ? What would have been the consequence of errors in their writings ? How did the enemies of Christ treat the testimony of his disciples ? Repeat some evidence, derived from the nature of the laws and the doctrines they inculcate, that the scriptures are not the work of impostors.

and threatening those who were guilty of them with the penalty of eternal death. This punishment the scriptures have actually denounced against all liars. They have therefore given strong presumptive evidence of their truth.

No conceivable motive could have induced Moses, had it been possible for him, to invent the accounts he has given, and palm them upon others. He could not have been influenced by the desire of aggrandizing himself or his family; for he particularly mentions his own infirmities and sins, and makes no attempt to secure the applause of men. He explicitly states his being slow of speech, his impatience at one time, his unbelief at another, and his rebelling against the commandment of the Lord at another, for which he was excluded from the promised land.

In the same manner he describes the failings of his nearest connections. The sons of Aaron are related to have perished by the hand of God for their violation of the ritual law; the tribe of the law-giver were involved in the rebellion of the Jews on the return of the spies; of his own sons he has given no particular account.

What does Moses write in regard to himself, and what does his manner of writing prove? Could he have had any inducement to give the accounts he has, had they been false?

How different is all this from a work of fiction, designed to establish and perpetuate the fame of the writer.

That Moses was not an enthusiast appears in his education and apparent temper of mind. He was educated in all the learning of Egypt, which was at that time the seat of literature for the known world. He was not rash and precipitate, but retiring and diffident. "Who am I," saith he, "that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt." Again he objects, "Behold they will not believe me, nor hearken unto my voice; for they will say, the Lord hath not appeared unto thee." This is not the language of impatient enthusiasm, which can see no difficulties; it is calm deliberation anticipating future realities.

No worldly greatness could have influenced Moses in his undertaking. He was probably heir apparent to the throne of Egypt, and might have enjoyed the luxury and splendor of one of the highest stations on earth. But he chose to suffer affliction with the people of God, in preference to the most elevated rank and the largest

How does it appear, that Moses was not an enthusiast? What was the character of Moses? To what was he heir, and what did he choose?

extent of empire. Such a writer could not have been swayed by ambition. Whatever comes from him carries the impress of truth on the face of it.

Much of the history he has recorded must have been true, for he relates facts which he affirms took place in the presence of six hundred thousand men. Had not these statements been correct, he could with the utmost ease have been convicted of falsehood. Yet he urges these facts as the most powerful motives for believing and obeying the Lord their God. Hear his appeal, *Ye know this day, for I speak not unto your children, that have not known them; after rehearsing a number of the most affecting events, he concludes: for your eyes have seen all these great acts of the Lord, which he did.* "Could Moses have established his authority among the thousands of Israel by alleging that he had performed various miracles in their behalf previously to their departure from Egypt; that they had seen rivers turned into blood; frogs filling the houses of the Egyptians; their fields desolated by hail and locusts; their

How does it appear, that the facts he relates must be true? What appeal does Moses make to the people? Relate some of the miracles, which he tells them, they had seen.

land covered for three days with darkness ; their first-born slain in one night ; the Red sea forming a wall for the Israelites, but overwhelming their enemies ; a pillar of cloud and of fire conducting them ; manna falling from heaven for their food ; the earth opening and destroying their opponents ; could Moses have confirmed his authority by relating these events, had they been false ? They are of a nature to preclude the possibility of imposition ; and by appealing to his adversaries who witnessed the transactions, he has given the most incontestible proof of the authenticity of his writings."

What has been said of Moses, is substantially true of all the other sacred penmen. The apostles had nothing to gain by publishing the gospel, had it been false. They could not have aspired to honor or emolument, for they knew that their faith subjected them to the loss of all things. Christ warned them to expect persecution, ignominy, and death, if they adhered to his instructions. To endure all this in propagating a system of known falsehood, would be contrary to every principle of our nature and of moral

What does the appeal of Moses prove ? Why can we not suppose, the apostles have published a false gospel ?

beings. In subjecting themselves to every species of suffering, and laying down their lives for the testimony of Jesus, they have given the highest evidence in the power of mortals to give, of the truth of what they have recorded.

Their whole conduct shows that they were not hurried away by a blind enthusiasm, but were slow to believe without thorough investigation and the fullest proof. Of this the unbelief of Thomas, respecting the resurrection of Christ, affords a striking example.

The character and acts ascribed to Christ could never have been the result of mere human invention. He who did no sin, neither was guile found in his lips, was without a parallel in the history of the world. The imagination of depraved beings could never have brought together an assemblage of virtuous and benevolent actions to form a spotless character like his, had it not actually existed. You see the sun rising in splendor and majesty, in a moment darting his rays over fields and forests, mountains and vallies, seas and continents; and you know in-

What does their conduct show? Give an example to prove they were slow to believe? Why could not a character like that of Christ have been described, had he never appeared on earth? How is this illustrated?

tuitively, that human power and skill never formed this glorious luminary. You are equally certain, that human learning and ingenuity never portrayed the character of Him who is "the light of the world;" without an original. It must have been utterly beyond the reach of finite minds to fill up the picture with the divine excellencies which shone in Immanuel. The writers must have copied from real life, and presented facts as they were actually set before them.

The historical accounts related by the apostles could not have been the work of human invention. The story that one, whose death was public and generally known, had arisen from the dead; that the sun was darkened at the time of his crucifixion; and that there was a great earthquake at that moment, could never have gained credit with those who lived in the same age, unless the events had actually taken place. Nor could the apostles have appeared to be endowed with the gift of tongues and actually have had power to speak in languages which they had never acquired, unless this had been a reality.

Why could not the accounts, related by the apostles, have been the work of human invention?

Many similar events might be mentioned, in which there could have been no deception, and which unquestionably prove the truth of the sacred record.

You may know by your own experience that the word of God is true. Repent and believe the gospel, and you will find it so admirably suited to your necessities, as to remove all doubt of its origin. You will find it has given a just description of your heart, of your vain thoughts, your repeated violations of the law of God, and consequent danger as a sinner. You will know it has described your true character, and the way in which you have obtained peace and reconciliation with God through the Redeemer. Make trial for yourself. Let the law of God, which condemns you for every sinful thought, word, and action, convince you of your lost state. Let your affections be surrendered in love to Christ. Obey the divine command, My son, give me thine heart. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God."

Since the Scriptures are true, we learn the

What evidence, originating in yourself, can you have, that the word of God is true? How can this evidence be obtained? What inference follows from the truth of the scriptures?

extreme guilt of making light of them. Many have been led away with the error of the wicked, and brought by insensible degrees, to the criminal practice of introducing expressions of the Bible into their sports and amusements, and common conversation, to give a zest to their profane wit. But the sacred record contains truths of tremendous import to all who thus abuse them; truths which are indeed able to make wise unto salvation through faith in Christ; but which become a savor of death unto death to those who treat them with irreverence. Their sin is committed directly and immediately against the great God, and is exceedingly aggravated. Have you ever been guilty of trifling with the holy scriptures? Pray God to forgive you; to teach you by his Holy Spirit, and lead you into all truth. "If thou seek him, he will be found of thee; if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off forever."

DISCOURSE V.



AUTHENTICITY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

JOHN iii. 11. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, we speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen ; and ye receive not our witness.

I HAVE endeavored to show the authenticity of the scriptures,

1. From the consideration that those who delivered them to us had a perfect knowledge of the subjects of which they have treated ; and

2. The sacred writers had no motives for practising deception, nor could the histories they have recorded be the work of human invention. If you regard these subjects with that interest which their importance demands you will give your attention to what is proposed,

3. To prove the authenticity, or truth of the scriptures from the ordinances and institutions which commemorate the principal facts related in them. These ordinances beginning at the

Repeat the arguments, which have been discussed, to prove the authenticity of the scriptures. What other evidence is here mentioned ?

time when the event happened, and statedly observed in remembrance of it, afford undeniable evidence that it really occurred. Let me mention one or two examples. The landing of our forefathers on Plymouth rock, took place Dec. 22, 1620; and the Declaration of American Independence was published July 4, 1776. The day of the year on which these events happened has been celebrated down to this time, and this annual celebration affords unquestionable proof that these events really occurred; and it will afford proof of the same, equally clear and certain, thousands of years to come, should such days continue to be observed so long. There is no period when it would have been possible to have introduced the celebration, had not the events taken place, for every one would have known the deception.

To what purpose should we attempt to convince people that on a certain day our ancestors arrived on these shores; and on another they declared themselves independent of the British government, had there been no truth in these things? Suppose they never had occurred, and it were now proposed to introduce the celebra-

Give an example in which ordinances prove the truth of what they commemorate. Why do they?

tion of them as though they took place last year. Would not all agree in saying, We never heard of these events before; there has been no remembrance of them preserved; no proof that they existed. On the contrary, we are sure they did not, and we will not keep a day on their account. Now apply these examples to the ordinances and institutions mentioned in the scriptures.

Circumcision was observed among the Jews from the time of Abraham through all succeeding generations. It commemorated the establishment of the church in the family of that eminent believer, the covenant of God with him and his seed, and the application of circumcision, as the seal of this covenant, to all the men of his house. This ordinance never could have been observed from that time onward, as commemorative of these events, had they not actually taken place.

The passover was a feast kept every year to commemorate the protection of the Israelites when the first born of the Egyptians were destroyed. The feast of tabernacles, also, and

What would people say to an attempt to introduce the celebration of events, which had never occurred? What religious rite was commenced in the family of Abraham? What did it commemorate? How long was it observed? For what purpose was the Passover kept?

that of Pentecost, were annually observed ; the former in memory of the journeying of Israel in the desert, and the latter in memory of the giving of the law from Sinai. These festivals were kept by the whole nation. They were founded on facts of public notoriety, and could no more have been introduced without the actual existence of those facts, than the practice of celebrating our independence without the cause to which we ascribe its origin.

Ordinances which confirm the principal facts related in the gospel have been continued down to our day. These are baptism and the Lord's supper. Christ instituted baptism as a seal, or badge of discipleship ; a declaration of the intimate relation in which his followers stand to God the Father as their Creator, God the Son as their Redeemer, and God the Holy Ghost as their Sanctifier. The evening before his crucifixion, the Saviour appointed the sacrament of the supper to be kept in commemoration of his death. These ordinances have been universally observed among his disciples through all subse-

Why was the feast of Tabernacles observed ? Why that of Pentecost ? Who observed these festivals ? How could they have been introduced ? What ordinances under the gospel ? Give the reasons for the appointment of each. How have they been observed ?

quent ages. The first day of the week, likewise, has been kept sacred in honor of his resurrection, and completion of the great work of redemption. How is it possible that this institution and these ordinances, beginning at the time, could have been generally adopted had not the events been real on which they are founded? Men never could have been persuaded, to any great extent, solemnly to commemorate that as true which at the same time they were sure was false. The institutions demonstrate the truth of the facts related.

4. The authenticity or truth of the scriptures is confirmed by the concurrent testimony of general history. Some faint traces of the leading historical events related in the bible have been discovered among the most enlightened heathen nations. Among them, indeed, these accounts are too much mixed with absurd fable, and enveloped in too deep obscurity to afford any certain knowledge, or consistent history, without the scriptures. The bible carries us back, by a luminous path, to the creation, and

What alteration was made respecting the Sabbath? What does it now commemorate? What do we learn from these ordinances? Is anything discoverable among heathen nations to prove the truth of the Bible? What is the difference between their accounts and those of the scriptures?

enables us to view the dealings of God with men in the clear light of noon day. But the twilight is not without its use. It shows that objects do actually exist, though seen imperfectly. The few hints and allusions handed down among heathen nations, constitute this twilight, and serve to confirm the accounts of scripture.

The Hindoo, Chinese, and many other nations, have preserved traditions of a primeval chaos and the production of all things by the efficiency of a Supreme Mind, which bear a near resemblance to the Mosaic account of creation. The clearness and precision of the one, however, and the fable of the other, sufficiently distinguish the sacred narrative from the distorted tradition. Do not the heathen traditions, that men once enjoyed complete happiness, that spring was perpetual, that the earth yielded her increase spontaneously, go to confirm the declarations of scripture respecting the primitive purity and felicity of our first parents. Does not the account of paradise and a promised Saviour, receive confirmation in the fabled golden age, and

Mention some nations, which have preserved traditions, similar to the facts related in the sacred record. Relate some of these traditions.

the garden of Hesperides?*

Do we not see the truth of the first fatal act of disobedience recognised in the 'Legend of Pandora? Led by a criminal curiosity to open a casket which had been given her by Jupiter, she let loose all the evil and wretchedness found among men: Hope alone; hope in a long remembered and promised deliverer, remained at the bottom of the casket.'

The present condition of the human race would afford unquestionable evidence of the apostacy, were there no concurrent proofs. That the fall of man was a real transaction appears in the labors, sorrows, afflictions, and death to which we are exposed, and in the jarring passions which agitate the human mind. In the discord of reason and conscience with sensual appetites, man is at war with himself, and shows that he is not what he was when he proceeded from the hand of his Maker. Accordingly it is written, "God hath made man up-

State the argument derived from the present condition of mankind.

*This garden was the fabled place where Hercules plucked the golden apples. They were carefully guarded by a dragon which never slept. Hercules is represented as gathering the apples, while the dragon appears bowing down his head, as having received a mortal wound.

right, but they have sought out many inventions. The crown is fallen from our head. In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die."

The declarations of scripture which teach the corruption of our natures in consequence of the first transgression, are supported by the writings of early heathen philosophers. "Pythagoras termed this corruption, the *fatal companion*, the *noxious strife that lurks within us*, and which was born along with us. Sopater called it the sin that is *born with mankind*. Plato styled it *natural wickedness*. Aristotle, the natural repugnancy of man's temper to reason: and all the Greek and Roman philosophers complain of the depraved and degenerate condition of mankind, of their propensity to every thing that is evil, and their aversion to every thing that is good. Seneca observes, that we are born in such a condition that we are not subject to fewer disorders of the mind than of the body. That all vices are, in all men, though they do not break out in every one; and that to confess them is the beginning of our cure. Horace declared that mankind rush into wickedness, and always

What have heathen philosophers said respecting the corruption of our natures? How does their testimony accord with the scriptures?

desire what is forbidden ; that youth has the softness of wax to receive vicious impressions, and the hardness of rock to resist virtuous admonitions ; and, in short, that we are mad enough to attack heaven itself." Do any deny their depravity and apostacy from God ? Let them blush for their unbelief, and go to the benighted Pagans for instruction if they will not credit the sacred record.

In nothing does general history more strikingly concur with the doctrines of the bible, than in the testimony it gives to the universal practice of offering expiatory sacrifices. The conviction has been common in all ages, that men were sinners and needed an atonement for sin. They have almost universally agreed, in their savage state, in offering slain beasts and staining their altars with human blood to take away their guilt and appease the wrath of heaven. And do not these rites exhibit some dark, perverted tradition of the great sacrifice to be offered on Calvary ? Do we not see, in the universal dread of the vengeance of Deity and the eagerness to avert it by offerings, a recogni-

In what have men, in their savage state, generally agreed ? Whence did they derive the idea of sacrifices, and to what event, although entirely perverted, might they refer ?

tion of the scripture truths, that God is angry with the wicked every day, but that there is mercy and forgiveness for the penitent, in Christ Jesus?

History furnishes abundant proof of the deluge, and confirms what the word of God has taught us on this awful subject.

Between the account of Lucian, a Greek historian, and that of the sacred scriptures, there is a striking resemblance. He has given a description of what the Greeks termed the flood of Deucalion, from the name of the person whom they suppose was preserved. Melo, a violent enemy of the Jews, and whose testimony on this subject is consequently the more valuable, takes notice of a person who was saved with his sons from the flood. Abydenus gives an account of the deluge from which Xisuthrus, the Chaldean Noah, was saved; and asserts that the ark first rested on the mountains of Armenia. Plutarch, in his history, mentions the flood. Sir William Jones informs us that the Chinese believe the earth to have been once wholly covered with

What scripture truth is illustrated by the universal dread of the divine displeasure? What do we learn from general history respecting the deluge? What heathen writers have mentioned this event?

water. The same author assures us that the Hindoos have preserved among them the account of an universal deluge. Tradition has perpetuated the memory of this event among many of the savage tribes, both on the eastern and western continents.

The scriptural account of the flood is likewise confirmed by facts existing in almost every quarter of the globe. It is evinced by large beds of sea shells found hundreds of miles from the ocean, and on some of the most lofty mountains; by the remains of trees and vegetable productions, discovered at great depths in the earth; and by the organic remains of a former world found in caves, or enclosed in rocks, bearing their silent testimony to the truth of revelation.

The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is noticed by Strabo, Tacitus, and Josephus, who essentially agree with the scriptures in their relation of this event.

The Greeks appear to have borrowed many of their customs from the Jews. I will notice but two instances. "Solon, in conformity with the Jewish practice, decreed that the time of the

What facts confirm the scriptural account of the flood? What historians speak of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah? See Gen. xix.

sun setting on the mountains should be deemed the last hour of the day. Lycurgus distributed the possession of lands by lot, and rendered them inalienable," as Joshua had done, when the twelve tribes were settled in Judea.

Who does not see a correspondence between the Egyptian tradition of four departures of the sun from his regular course, and the account of Joshua, "That the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day," and the declaration in the time of Hezekiah, that "The sun went back ten degrees on the dial of Ahaz." History, in short, abounds with correspondencies which confirm the authenticity of the scriptures.

This is particularly true in regard to the New Testament. Many instances might be mentioned, but a few must suffice.* It is written, that when Pilate had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified; that he, bearing his cross, went forth; that the soldiers came and brake the

What customs do the Greeks appear to have borrowed from the Jews? How does Egyptian tradition, concerning the sun, correspond with the scriptures? What circumstances, mentioned in the New Testament, receive confirmation from profane history?

*The reader is requested to consult Dr. Paley's Evidences of Christianity, upon this part of the subject.

legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him." History informs us that it was customary to treat those who were crucified in this manner. We read in Acts xii., that "On a set day, Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne and made an oration; and the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god and not of a man: and immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms and gave up the ghost." The same event is attested by Josephus. This historian says of it, "Early in the morning, Herod came into the theatre, dressed in a robe of silver, of most curious workmanship. The rays of the rising sun reflected from such a splendid garb, gave him a majestic and awful appearance. They called him a god; and intreated him to be propitious to them, saying, Hitherto we have respected you as a man; now we acknowledge you to be more than mortal. The king neither reprov'd these persons nor rejected the impious flattery. Immediately after this he was seized with pains in his bowels, extremely violent at the very first. He was carried therefore with all haste to his palace. These pains continu-

ally tormenting him, he expired in five days time."

The scriptures speak of multitudes, who were slain for the testimony of Jesus; of those "who had trial of cruel mockings and scourging, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword." History informs us that thousands of Christians perished in the bloody persecutions which took place under Nero, Trajan, and other Roman emperors; that their sufferings at the time of their execution were enhanced by insult and mockery; that they were thrown to wild beasts, were crucified, and destroyed in every way which ingenuity and rage could invent. Pliny, about eighty years after the ascension of Christ, wrote thus to the Roman emperor, from one of the distant provinces of the empire: "Great numbers of persons are in danger of suffering; for many of all ages, and of every rank, of both sexes likewise, are accused, and will be accused." They were found not in "cities only, but in

How are the early Christians said to have been treated? Does history confirm this account? Under what emperors were the Christians persecuted? What does Pliny say of them? How long after the ascension of Christ did he write?

lesser towns also, and the open country." This letter from a bitter enemy of the gospel, confirms both the scriptural account of the cruel persecutions of Christians, and the declarations of the sacred writers respecting the rapid spread of the Christian religion. "So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed. Not only at Ephesus, but throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people" from their idolatry.

The rapid progress of the gospel, notwithstanding its opposition to the depraved passions of men, and though resisted by all nations, is a divine attestation of its truth. Stronger testimonies to the credibility of any historical fact than can be adduced for the authenticity of the scriptures it is impossible to bring. The affairs of foreign countries, in our own time, are not more fully evinced to us than the transactions recorded in the word of God. These have come to us with evidence which has lost nothing by the length of time intervening since the events transpired.

What else do his writings prove, beside the persecutions of Christians? What do we learn from the rapid spread of the gospel?

I shall close with a few reflections.

1. How great is their folly who flatter themselves with the idea of man's native innocence. How many labor to persuade themselves and others that they have no deep, innate depravity, and that consequently they do not need the renovation of heart which the gospel demands. A little outward reformation they think, will answer their purpose; a slight attention to some of the external acts of religion, to public worship and a few formal services, in which the affections are never engaged, they imagine will render them acceptable to God. Some presumptuously hope for salvation while indulging in the grossest vices. Be not deceived. Even the heathen have better notions of their true condition. They have felt and acknowledged that they possess a depraved nature. The views of many of their philosophers have approached near to the scriptural declarations of man's entire depravity; that *his heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil*

What practical remark is derived from this subject? Has any doctrine of the gospel been acknowledged by heathen philosophers?

continually ; that the carnal, or natural, mind is enmity against God.

Of what folly are they guilty, who, with the wisest of all nations and the God of truth against them, still persist in priding themselves on their supposed innocence and goodness. How often is it said of one notoriously vile and wicked, that he has a good heart. What an abuse of language is it to cover his sins under a soothing epithet, and how directly do these views of native purity tend to confirm the unwary in sin, and ruin their souls forever. They will never apply the remedy graciously provided for them, until they behold their perishing necessities ; and these they will never see while they flatter themselves that they are not utterly destitute of holiness.

2. How absolute is the necessity of regeneration. The necessity has been felt by Pagan philosophers, who knew not how this great and happy change could be effected, nor in what it must consist. All their instructions were utterly inefficient ; they left men as they found them, the servants of corruption.

What doctrine, and how is it often evaded among those nominally Christian ?

The absolute need of this change is evinced by the idolatry, degradation, and wickedness of all heathen nations.

It appears likewise in the stupidity, impiety, irreverence of God, and neglect of his worship and service, in those who have lived unregenerate under the light of the gospel. With all their privileges they have evinced an entire alienation from their Maker and Redeemer. They seek their own exclusively, and not the things which are Christ's; they are earthly in their desires and pursuits, and follow the maxims of this world, more than the commands of God. They find no delight in communing with the Father of Spirits, and never desire to purify themselves as he is pure. Holiness is an object of their aversion, and often of their profane and impious scoffs and revilings. And can they inhabit the regions of purity, or taste the joys of heaven in their present pollution and guilt? Can they who are wholly averse to all the attributes of Deity exult in the beams of divine glory, and find a felicity unalloyed in the presence of God and the Lamb? Nothing can be more preposterous than to suppose they could. Nothing

Mention some evidences of the necessity of regeneration.

can be more certain, were we to reason only from human depravity and the character of Jehovah, than this truth, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Settle it then in your minds, that unless you experience this renovation of heart, unless you are born of the Spirit, and become new creatures in Christ Jesus, you shall be banished from the joys of heaven and lie down in eternal sorrow. The God of truth has declared and your own consciences confirm his word, that you must be renewed in time, or you are undone in eternity. O, awake to this great concern, you who have never yet engaged in it in earnest. Converted you must be, or you are a ruined creature forever. While you slumber in your impenitence, you slumber on the brink of a precipice, and the slightest touch plunges you down to remediless woe.

3. How justly are Christians entitled to credit in the account they give of their religious experience.

Why are Christians entitled to credit, when they speak of their religious experience?

rience. Conversion is a work which God has taught us to expect. It is agreeable to the holiness of his character to transform the subjects of his moral government into his image, before he admits them to his reconciled favor. This change is one of which Christians are as able to judge as of any other exercise of their minds. They have perceived an alteration in their affections in regard to all spiritual objects; a surrender to Jesus; a brokenness of heart for sin; a love for divine truth and the revealed character of God and Christ; and new desires after holiness and communion with their Maker and Redeemer; they have clearly perceived these things, and may justly say of them, "We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen." In relating what God has done for their souls, they know they are not following the delusions of imagination; but are giving an account of a reasonable and necessary work of grace on their hearts. Their testimony ought to be believed, for it accords with scripture and the offices of the Holy Spirit. It ought to be believed, to deepen in every sinner the conviction that he must experience the same himself, or be

irrecoverably lost. The faithful and true witness has declared concerning the unbelieving, "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish, for I work a work in your day, which ye will not believe, though a man declare it unto you."

DISCOURSE VI.

INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES.

2 TIMOTHY, iii. 16. All scripture is given by inspiration of God.

THE scriptures are not only genuine and authentic, or the productions of the persons who claim to have written them, and a statement of facts and truths; they are likewise a revelation from God. They were written under the influence of his Spirit, and are justly styled the *word of God*. True, they contain many sayings of wicked men and fallen angels, and many of the historical events were fully known by the writers without a revelation. By inspiration is meant such assistance of the Holy Spirit as to preserve the sacred penmen from error in relating what they might have learned from the ordinary means of information, and such communications of light and knowledge from God as to enable

What is meant by inspiration of the scriptures?

them to unfold what could otherwise never have been known by mortals.

In what manner divine communications were made to the inspired writers is to us in a great measure unknown. Sometimes it appears to have been by immediate suggestion, in which the words and expressions were from God; and at other times by symbolical representations made to the mind, producing ideas, which the writer expressed in the style and language with which he was most familiar. But in whatever way he received knowledge from the Most High, it was accompanied with the assurance that he was "moved by the Holy Ghost," and that he recorded neither more nor less than it was the will of God should be communicated to the world. Such was the divine superintendency and movement in the whole of the sacred volume, that it is emphatically and with propriety denominated the "Book of God."

That all scripture was thus given by inspiration I shall now endeavor to prove. A more interesting subject never engaged the human mind. It is to settle every principle of faith and practice,

How were divine communications made to the sacred writers? What accompanied these communications? Why is the Bible called the Book of God?

and decide our prospects for eternity. Reader, will you not give it a diligent and prayerful examination, and dwell on it as your life.

1. All scripture was given by inspiration of God, for the knowledge of the human heart which these writings manifest could have proceeded only from omniscience.

All the wisdom of heathen philosophers combined, has never been able to disclose the secret springs of human action, nor to render men happy and obedient subjects of the divine government. Some of their maxims were excellent, but they were powerless. They left the heart unaffected. To purify this fountain of moral action, was an object never achieved by human wisdom and learning. After all their efforts, men were left to the unavailing lamentation of the inefficacy of their own instructions and the desolations of abounding wickedness.

The bible lifts up the veil from the human heart, and applies an effectual remedy to its disorders. It shows why the world in general live in the neglect of God and eternity, why they shun the paths of peace and holiness and pursue

What evidence is here given, that the scriptures were inspired? How does this exceed what can be found in heathen writings?

the ways of sin, contrary to the dictates of their own reason and conscience. It tells men, when they have seen the right, why they still pursue the wrong; why they continue to transgress in view of all the misery they are bringing upon themselves. It is a perfect mirror, exhibiting the depraved passions of the natural man, and all the secret wickedness which lurks in his breast. As the woman of Samaria, on being told by the Saviour all things which ever she did, was instantly convinced that he was a divine personage; so the sinner, seeing his character delineated in the bible, is struck with the overwhelming conviction that this must be the work of omniscience. His secret thoughts and intentions, which had escaped the notice of the world and even his own observation, are here reflected full upon his view.

But the scriptures not only discover to him his spiritual deformities; they are wonderfully fitted to affect and subdue the stubborn heart and reconcile the offender to his injured Sovereign. This they have sought to accomplish, not by the mere force of law or authority. Statutes the

To what are the scriptures compared, with respect to the knowledge they give of ourselves? Show the propriety of this figure. What end are the scriptures wisely fitted to accomplish?

most equitable and warnings the most alarming would have been utterly unavailing. The transgressor would have continued to look upon the Supreme Legislator as an oppressive tyrant. He would have stood nerved and braced against all the threats and commands which could have been given. Had he been overpowered by superior force he would have retained the heart of a rebel, and been filled with sullen indignation against the power by which he was subdued. Accordingly the scriptures have come to us with a melting and overpowering appeal to the heart, and have sought by matchless love to gain the affections of the sinner, and thus render him a willing subject of Jehovah's kingdom.

His life had been forfeited to avenging justice, and in the oracles of truth we see the Lord of glory condescending to suffer, the just for the unjust. The Beloved of the Father takes the place of the offender; the sword awakes against the Shepherd; he is stricken and smitten of God, and expires in agony on the cross. Thousands are effectually convinced of their guilt. They

How do the scriptures seek to gain the affections? What would have been the effect, had they merely commanded submission? What did Christ, the Beloved of the Father, do? What peculiar wisdom in this method of giving instruction?

look on Him whom they have pierced, and mourn. Their hearts are softened and humbled in view of the mighty sufferer, and they return with penitence to supplicate mercy of their injured Lord.

Take another illustration of this transaction. Fancy to yourselves "a company of men traveling along the sea-shore. One of them better acquainted with the ground than the rest, warns them of quicksands, and points out to them a landmark which indicated the position of a dangerous pass. They however see no great reason for apprehension; they are anxious to get forward, and cannot resolve upon making a considerable circuit in order to avoid what appears to them an imaginary evil; they reject his counsel and proceed onwards. In these circumstances, what argument ought he to use? What mode of persuasion can we imagine fitted to fasten on their minds a strong conviction of the reality of their danger and the disinterested benevolence of their adviser. His words have been ineffectual; he must try some other method; he must act. And he does so; for seeing no other way of prevailing on them, he desires them

Give an example to illustrate the affecting love of Christ,

to wait only a single moment till they see the truth of his warning confirmed by his fate. He goes before them, he puts his foot on the seemingly firm sand, and sinks to death. This eloquence is irresistible; he was the most active and vigorous among them; if any one could have extricated himself from the difficulty, it was he; they are persuaded; they make the necessary circuit, bitterly accusing themselves of the death of their generous companion; and during their progress, as often as these landmarks occur, his nobleness and their own danger rise to their minds and secure their safety. Rashness now is not perilous merely, it is ungrateful; it is making void the death of their deliverer." Apply this to the method which God has taken to convince the sinner of his danger, and subdue his heart by unequalled love. The Creator himself is the Monitor, who, in the person of Immanuel, condescends to manifest the evil of sin by enduring its consequences. "He himself encountered the terrors of guilt, and bore its punishment, and called on his careless creatures to consider and understand the evil of

Show how the example is applied to the Creator in the person of Christ.

transgression by contemplating even its undeserved effects on a being of perfect purity, who was over all, God, blessed forever. Could they hope to sustain that weight which had crushed the Son of God? Could they rush into that guilt and that danger against which he had so pathetically warned them?"

Into what imagination could such an expedient have entered to subdue a province of rebellious subjects, had it not been revealed from the Creator? Who could have devised a scheme which would have made so powerful and so tender an appeal to the heart, and brought the multitude which no man can number to the foot of the cross for pardon and eternal life? The bible must have come from that omniscient Being who knew, better than they had ever known, what is in men.

2. The inspiration of the scriptures is manifest from their sublime doctrines and pure morality. These are far beyond what human reason of itself could ever have discovered. The perfections and purposes of Deity are unfolded with a clearness and majesty found in no other book.

Could human reason have devised such a scheme of mercy? What will you infer from this? State the second evidence, that the scriptures are inspired.

While every other professed description falls immeasurably below his true character, in the scriptures he is described in all the dignity and glory becoming the holy Sovereign of the universe. He is exhibited as self-existent, independent, and eternal. He is clothed with omnipotence, omnipresence, and omniscience. We see in Him the inspector of all our actions ; whose eye at the same moment watches our every step, lights on the most distant parts of creation, and looks through all periods of time. He is represented as possessing a perfect plan of his own operations from the morning of creation,

———“ The great eternal scheme,
Involving all, and in a perfect whole
Uniting.”

as immutable in his counsels, and infinitely removed beyond all disappointment or surprise from unexpected occurrences. We see the rainbow of mercy about the throne, while justice sits inflexible in its demands against every obstinate, impenitent transgressor. We see the holiness of God rendering him the eternal enemy of sin, and constituting the light unapproachable and full of glory wherein he dwelleth ; and

How is God exhibited in the scriptures ?

his benevolence employed in diffusing happiness through the universe.

The unity of God, and the adorable Trinity, shine with unclouded radiance in the system of redemption. That "He, who was the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person; whom all the angels of God do worship; who thought it not robbery to be equal with God; and who was God;" that he should become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, is a mystery of love and mercy which neither men nor angels could have deemed possible, nor could it have entered the imagination of creatures had it not been revealed in the gospel.

In the bible we are taught the method of justification by faith in Christ. We learn the necessity of a thorough renovation of heart, and how it may be accomplished by the word of truth, and the agency of the Holy Spirit. To crown all, a state of eternal rewards and punishments is opened to our view, giving the highest possible sanction to the precepts of revelation, and enforcing obedience by the most overwhelming motives.

What are some of the sublime doctrines of the Bible ?

Open the sacred volume, and you see yourself arraigned before your God and Judge, from whose presence you can never for one moment withdraw; you see the Spirit of grace and truth ready to heal your diseased nature, and take up his abode with you; you find yourself in the presence of an innumerable company of holy angels, ready to guard you on every hand, and lead you on to mansions of bliss; you learn that you are beset, too, with hosts of malignant spirits, watching their opportunity to allure you into sin and destroy your soul. Open the sacred volume, and the history of the world spreads itself before you; you behold the successive steps by which the visible creation arose into existence; you see the earth established by wisdom, the heavens stretched out by discretion; and listen to the sons of God in the morning of creation, shouting for joy. You trace, as on a map, the grand course of events since the great drama of the world commenced. You see the deluge sweeping the face of the earth; you enter the ark with the chosen family, and behold them riding securely amidst the raging tempest. You see Jehovah guarding the church as the apple

Mention some of the principal events related in the Bible.

of his eye, in every age; you stand by the babe in the manger, and hear the hosts of angels proclaiming, Glory to God in the highest. You look down the vale of time, and behold the consummation of all things; the Judge descending; the dead awaking; the heavens rolling together as a scroll; the nations assembling before the dread tribunal. You listen to the decision which settles the affairs of the universe, and are carried away into the scenes of eternity, to witness its execution in the prison of despair, which shall never be unbarred to release its miserable tenants; and in the abodes of purity and bliss, where all tears shall be wiped away, and the weary shall forever be at rest.

The morality of the bible is pure, excelling all which the wisdom of this world has ever taught, as light excels darkness, or the perfection of the heavenly state excels the pollutions of earth and sense. Infidelity has denied that the morality of the gospel was of a holy nature; but she has been unable to sustain the charge. What has occasioned the wide, the manifest distinction between Christian and heathen nations?

How does it appear, that the morality of the scriptures exceeds what the wisdom of this world has ever taught?


What has placed a guard around all the relations in society where the gospel has been received? What has rendered inviolable the sanctity of oaths, and enforced every where the duty of doing by others as we would have them do by us? Why are those places where the scriptures are the most studied and best regarded peculiarly noted for integrity and virtue? Why is a revival of religion, in which the word is attended with power, invariably accompanied with a visible reformation in all who become the hopeful subjects of grace? Why do the profane cease from their imprecations, the intemperate quit their excess, and the licentious renounce the haunts of vice the moment they begin to shape their lives by the precepts of the gospel? Let its pure and elevated morality answer. It is a morality absolutely perfect, flowing from supreme love to God, and demanding undeviating rectitude. It carries its requisitions in, and lays them upon the thoughts, enforcing purity of intention as well as of visible conduct. How spiritual, how broad are the commands, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love your

For what are those places distinguished, where the scriptures are most regarded? What is the source of Christian morality? By what commands is it enjoined?

enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you. Be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another."

Such doctrines, such morality, must have been given by inspiration of God. They could no more be the result of human invention, than the creation of a world could be the effect of human power.

And now, reader, before we proceed further with the argument, suffer me to bring the subject nearer home, and inquire what influence the gospel has had on your heart and life. Have you been alarmed by the representation of sin made in the sufferings of Christ and the law of God? Has the stupendous system of redemption caught your admiring view, and while you have fixed your eye upon the cross have you wondered and wept? Have you possessed a broken and contrite spirit, rendering you averse to the delusive pleasures of sin, and exciting earnest desires after holiness? Have you found by happy experience that the law of the Lord is

 The teacher is requested to put the questions on this and the following page with solemnity, and receive from the pupils an answer.

perfect, converting the soul; that the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; that the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart? Have they appeared to you more desirable than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honey comb? Have you reposed an unwavering confidence in the scriptures? Since they are a communication from God, they are of the highest authority, and no appeal is ever to be made from their decision. They are to settle every principle of faith and practice. Have you yielded to the alarming, the endearing motives to piety which they have presented, and begun to exemplify the pure and heavenly morality which they have inculcated? Have you sought to shun the appearance of evil by avoiding the places of peculiar temptation; the occasions and company which would lead you into sin? Are you habitually endeavoring to mortify every vicious propensity, and to adorn the doctrines of God our Saviour in all things? If so, you have reason to believe that Christ has become your friend, and given you an interest in his everlasting covenant. Young as you are, you have en-

tered the path which leads to glory, honor, immortality, eternal life. You have commenced the bright career which conducts to the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; in whose presence is fullness of joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures forevermore. Often examine your heart, and look to Christ for grace to enable you to persevere in his service. Live by faith in the word of God. Let its distinguishing truths dwell on your mind, be interwoven in all your plans and pursuits, and become more and more the living principles of all your actions. On the contrary, are you conscious, my young friends, that you are destitute of piety; that you have never known the love of Christ, and have no peculiar delight in what he has revealed? You have repeatedly heard the gospel, but it has made no saving impression on your minds. You have loved vanity and forsaken the counsel of God. You are giving the best of your years to the service of sin, and whether God will spare you to repent at some future day is, at least, a dreadful uncertainty. The present is the sweet, the mediatorial hour. O, let it be improved by turning now to the Lord. Consecrate your

affections and your lives to him who made you.
“If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thy-
self; but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt
bear it.”

DISCOURSE VII.



INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES.

2 TIMOTHY, iii. 11. All scripture is given by inspiration of God.

THE truth of this declaration has been shown,

1. From the knowlege of the human heart which these writings manifest, which could have proceeded only from omniscience.

2. From their sublime doctrines and pure morality. I observe,

3. The inspiration of the scriptures appears in the harmony of the sacred writers.

They continued to succeed each other during a period of more than fifteen hundred years. Upon every other subject the opinions of men were unsettled and fluctuating. Every theory in science and morals was constantly changing. But the sacred writers, though living in distant

State the third argument in favor of the inspiration of the scriptures. How long a period intervened between the first and last of the sacred writers? What is the first and last book of the Bible, and who wrote them?

ages and different countries, amidst a great diversity of customs, prejudices, and modes of thinking, were uniform in all the instructions they delivered. Scarcely anything could exceed the diversity in the early education of Moses, Samuel, David, Paul, and the apostles. We see Moses coming from the idolatrous court of Egypt to be the prophet of the true God; Samuel, while a child, ministering before the Lord in Shiloh; David, taken from the sheep-cote to pour forth the elevated strains of piety and devotion which have ever since edified and animated the church; Paul, brought up at the feet of a Pagan Gamaliel, becoming the bold champion of the cross of Christ; and the apostles, from being fishermen on the sea of Galilee, becoming the historians of our Lord, and the teachers of the world. With all this difference of education, habits, and private interest, no one ever contradicted the assertions of those who preceded him. All the writers delivered, and continued to deliver, substantially the same account of God, of his attributes, of Christ, and

In what did the condition of the sacred writers differ? Give some account of the diversity, which appears in their early education. Would this naturally lead to a great difference of feeling and sentiment? Did any such difference exist? In what respects did they all agree?

the system of redemption, of the ruined condition of man, of his duties, obligations, and destinies.

Notwithstanding the assertions of infidelity to the contrary, the closest criticism has been able to detect no contradictions which could not be easily reconciled by a reference to the different modes of computing time ; to the general scope and design of the different writers ; and the consequent omission of some things by one which were inserted by others. The writers harmonize with each other ; yet not in a manner to imply combination. There is no studied effort to maintain the appearance of agreement, but every one pursues his leading object ; no one dissents from the rest in the doctrines or precepts advanced.

Whence could have arisen this agreement on subjects the most difficult and the most interesting, had they not been revealed by the unchangeable Creator ? How could reason, at once, have arrived at clear knowledge, where it would be most liable to err, while it remained in the dark upon almost every other subject ?

How may we easily reconcile those things of minor importance in which they appear to differ ? What is a peculiar and important feature of their agreement ?

This can reasonably be attributed to no other cause except the Spirit of inspiration guiding the writers into all truth. God is light, in Him there is no darkness, and he has impressed his own blessed image on the sacred page.

4. The prophecies afford another argument in favor of the inspiration of the scriptures.

Prophecy is a declaration of future events, which can be known only by omniscience. Men may conclude what will be from what has been, where the causes and effects are uniform, and have been repeatedly observed. The prophecies have unfolded the future, minute circumstances of individuals and the great revolutions of states and empires, than which nothing can be more fluctuating, and, to human view, more uncertain. Some predictions respected events exceedingly complicated and far distant, depending on the arbitrary will of many individuals, and a great variety of preparatory incidents. Some were to be fulfilled shortly after they were delivered, and others relate to the remotest periods of time, and together they form a history of futurity, extending through all ages, until

What is the inference? What do the prophecies prove? What is prophecy? What general events has it unfolded? To what distant periods does it reach?

time shall be no longer. This wonderful chain of prophecy may be traced throughout the writings of Moses and the prophets, the instructions of Christ and his apostles.

It was foretold that the posterity of Abraham should be in bondage four hundred years, and come out with great substance; that they should possess the land of Canaan; should be expelled for their sins, and be restored again after their captivity. These predictions were actually fulfilled according to the times specified. The glowing sketch of the destruction of Jerusalem, and the scenes of unparalleled horror and distress accompanying the fall of that city, drawn beforehand by the faithful pen of the prophet, proved to be awful realities in a subsequent age. That the Jews should be *dispersed among all nations*; that they should be *scattered and peeled*; should every where become an *astonishment*, a *proverb*, and a *by-word*, are declarations which have received, or are now receiving, their accomplishment. Not far from two hundred predictions respecting the Jews have been accurately fulfilled. Many of these were uttered

Mention some predictions, which have been fulfilled? How numerous are those, which respect the Jews? How long were they uttered, before the events to which they related took place?

hundreds of years before the events to which they related took place, and with a particularity bordering upon the description of the historian.

Scarcely less numerous or striking have been the prophecies concerning other nations. Of Tyre, one of the most flourishing cities of antiquity, it was predicted that it should become "like the top of a rock," and should be a "place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea." This was realized by the desolations brought on that devoted city by Nebuchadnezzar, Alexander the Great, and other conquerors. Of Egypt it was declared, in the midst of its greatness, that it should become the "basest of kingdoms;" of Nineveh and Babylon, that they should be a possession for the bittern; that wild beasts of the desert should dwell there; that they should not be inhabited from generation to generation. These events have long since occurred with astonishing exactness, and contrary to all human probability.

Prophecies relating to Messiah began early after the apostacy. To him gave all the prophets witness, throwing around him the light of

What are some of the prophecies respecting other nations, which have been fulfilled? How early did those begin, which respect Christ?

their united testimony. They delineated his true character, "and displayed with equal beauty and truth the time and place of his birth, and the effects and consequences of his advent." Christ and his apostles foretold numerous events which befel the primitive Christians; the rise and overthrow of Papal superstition and Mohammedan delusion, and the general state of the church to the end of time. Many of these prophecies have already received their completion, and given assurance that the remainder will be fulfilled in their season.

How immeasurably beyond all human forecast or discernment are the numerous, extraordinary, and improbable events, foretold in scripture, which have occurred in a manner exactly answering to the prediction. What a perfect contrast is here presented to the obscure, ambiguous, and mercenary declarations of heathen oracles. How could any being, except the omniscient God, remove the vail of futurity and extend the ken of human vision through the long vista of succeeding ages, so that their opening and most improbable scenes could be described with

What are some of the events foretold by Christ and his apostles? Why does prophecy prove the inspiration of scripture?

perfect accuracy? The bible then is an inspired book. This is further evident,

5. From the miracles which it records.

A miracle is the suspending or reversing of some of the established laws of nature, requiring the immediate interposition of that Almighty power which preserves and governs the universe. This power God has often exerted in an extraordinary manner to confirm the messages he has communicated to men. 'A miracle is the testimony of God, and a proof of the divine mission of him by whom it is wrought. There could be no doubt that God had spoken by those through whose instrumentality the plagues of Egypt were inflicted; the Red Sea was divided; waters flowed from the rock; Jordan was stayed in its course; at whose word fire came down from heaven; demons fled away; diseases were healed; sight was imparted to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb, and life to the dead.'

The public ministry of Christ presents a continual course of miracles, performed not merely in the presence of professed friends, but of

What is a miracle? What do miracles prove? Who performed the most astonishing miracles, and what were some of them?

avowed enemies. He healed multitudes in sight of chief priests and rulers, who were seeking his life. When he fed the five thousand in the wilderness, when he allayed the storm and composed the raging element; when he restored to life the son of the widow, as the funeral procession was proceeding to the burial, and when he called Lazarus from the tomb, there could have been no deception. Equally impossible was it that there should have been any in the miracles wrought by the prophets and apostles. They were worthy the interposition of God; were performed in cases manifestly beyond the reach of any remedy, except the mighty energy which controls all events; were attested by numerous witnesses, competent to judge of the facts submitted to their inspection; and accompanied by effects which proved their reality. Inveterate prejudices were overcome by them, and multitudes persuaded to embrace the gospel, who sealed their belief of its truth with their blood.

In vain does unbelief attempt to contrast with this testimony the pretended miracles of the heathen, or of the false prophet of Mecca. The ma-

Could there have been any deception in the miracles of Christ? What is said of the magicians of Egypt?

gicians of Egypt used their enchantments, but they were put to silence and forced to confess that the works of Moses were performed by the *finger of God*. The miracles ascribed to Mohammed were wholly unsupported by evidence, and were never attributed to him by his deluded followers, until long after his death. They are related to have been performed in the night and in secret, or before one or two accomplices in the fraud. How different is all this from the open and undisguised miracles recorded in scripture; miracles wrought in the face of day, before thousands of witnesses, who proclaimed them at the hazard of life, and who were never confuted by their bitterest enemies. The evidence of miracles comes down to us unimpaired. They are the seal which God himself has set to the inspiration of the bible; the attestation of eternal truth, that holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

6. The rapid spread of the gospel against all opposing obstacles proves its divine origin. The gospel was opposed by the combined influence of learning, and talents, and civil authority; by

How do the miracles, recorded in scripture, exceed those ascribed to Mohammed? What do we learn from the rapid spread of the gospel? How was it treated?

all the prejudices and depraved passions of a world. It was resisted too by the long established systems of superstition which had formed the habits, enslaved the minds, and engrossed the affections of all nations. Never could it have overcome the difficulties which withstood its progress, had it not been accompanied by the special power of God. Without this the child of heaven would have died in its infancy. The truths announced would have fallen into oblivion, or have become the objects of scorn and contempt.

Mohammed propagated his religion by force. He had wealth, and civil influence, and authority to aid him in disseminating his delusions. He accommodated his system to the prevailing opinions and customs of his day. With all these advantages, during the first seven years he could scarcely reckon one hundred followers.

Christ appeared in circumstances of the deepest poverty. His gospel was uncompromising in its demands. It was an exclusive system, differing totally from all others on earth, and at

How would the gospel ever have gained a reception among men? How did Mohammed propagate his religion? In what circumstances did Christ appear, and how did he proceed in spreading the gospel?

open war with them. He chose for his disciples twelve poor and illiterate fishermen, without patronage, without influence, and utterly destitute of every thing to allure others into the service of their master. He submitted to an ignominious death, according to his prediction, and against the whole power of the Jewish nation, and of all other nations, his gospel had to force its way in the world. A few days after the ascension there were at Jerusalem an hundred and twenty who were willing to be known openly as the disciples of Jesus. "Ten days after there were added to them about *three thousand* souls. Soon after the number of men was about *five thousand*; shortly after we are told that *multitudes* of believers, both men and women, were added to the Lord; that the *number of disciples* was *multiplied in Jerusalem greatly*, and that a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith."

Such was the progress of Christianity in about two years. This success was at Jerusalem, where Christ had been crucified, and consequently where there was the least prospect that

With what had the gospel to contend? How rapidly did it prevail, or how extensively within two years? Why did it meet with peculiar difficulties at Jerusalem?

he would obtain followers; here too was the seat of government and learning in Judea, and the place above all others where opposition would be the most virulent and powerful.

During the next seven years the gospel was received at Cesarea, the residence of the Roman governors of Palestine, and a great number believed at Antioch, where the disciples were first called Christians. Soon after, the complaint of Demetrius, that not only at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, Paul had persuaded and turned away much people, shows the rapid diffusion of the gospel. We see this single apostle bearing the tidings of redeeming love throughout Judea and the provinces of Asia Minor; erecting the standard of the cross on the islands of Cyprus, and Rhodes, and Crete; traversing two great empires and publishing the gospel through their towns and provinces; and churches rising and flourishing every where in his progress. He had occasion to write epistles to all the saints at Rome, to the churches at Corinth, in Galatia, at Ephesus, Colossé, and Thessalonica, and to the disciples at Phillippi, with the bishops and dea-

Where were the disciples first called Christians? What was the complaint of Demetrius? How extensive were Paul's labors? To what churches did he write epistles?

cons. The followers of Christ must therefore have been exceedingly multiplied.

History informs us that soon after the first preaching of the gospel, churches were established and bishops settled in almost every part of the then known world. Justin Martyr, who wrote one hundred and six years after the ascension, says, "There is not a nation, either Greek or Barbarian, or of any other name, even of those who wander in tribes, and live in tents, amongst whom prayers and thanksgivings are not offered to the Father and Creator of the universe, by the name of the crucified Jesus." About fifty years later, Tertullian writes, "We were but of yesterday, and we have filled your cities, islands, towns, and burroughs; the camp, the senate, and the forum." Thirty years after the above period, we have the testimony of Origen, that "In every part of the world, throughout all Greece, and in all other nations, there are innumerable and immense multitudes, who, having left the laws of their country, and those whom they esteemed gods, have given themselves up to the law of Moses and the religion

How long after Christ did Justin Martyr write? What is his statement? When, and what did Tertullian write? How much later are the writings of Origen, and what is his testimony?

of Christ ; and this not without the bitterest resentment from the idolaters, by whom they were frequently put to torture, and sometimes to death ; and it is wonderful to observe how, in so short a time, the religion has increased amidst punishment and death, and every kind of torture." Such was the astonishing spread of Christianity, notwithstanding its progress was opposed by the fires of persecution, and by all the sufferings which ingenuity and hatred could invent. "By how much the more," says Origen, "emperors and governors of provinces, and the people every where, strove to depress Christians ; so much the more have they increased and prevailed exceedingly." The preservation of the Christian religion in the world, and its progress during two or three of the first centuries, are standing miracles in attestation of its divine origin. It was owned of God, and declared to be a religion from heaven, by its rapid diffusion against all opposing obstacles.

This subject shows that the gospel is of a practical tendency. It has led multitudes to

What does he state respecting persecution ? What are we to infer from the rapid spread of the gospel against so many obstacles ? What is the tendency of the gospel, and how does this appear ?

love Christ more than father, or mother, or brother, or sister; yea, more than their own lives. They have been ready to suffer the loss of all things, that they might win Christ, and be found in him. The gospel seizes on all the great springs of human action. It makes the strongest possible appeal to our hopes and fears, our desires of enjoyment and our dread of misery. The promises secure to the believer the blessed privilege of having Christ for his friend on earth, and of being admitted to the everlasting enjoyment of his presence in the coming world. Against the unbelieving and disobedient there are denunciations of the most tremendous import. Of them it is declared, "They shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire, which is the second death. These shall go away into everlasting punishment." The warning has been hung out from the heavens in broad capitals, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." What motives more powerful could be urged to persuade us to quit every course of sin, and live in all holy conversation and godliness. Heaven invites with all its joys, and hell warns with all its terrors. The love of Christ and all the glorious attributes of God con-

strain to a life of obedience. Who can yield to the gospel his cordial assent, and not feel impelled to walk in newness of life? Dear reader, has it had this influence upon you? Have its invitations and warnings come home with power to your bosom, and have you begun to live as the grace of God teacheth?

DISCOURSE VIII.

INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES.

2 TIMOTHY, iii. 16. All scripture is given by inspiration of God.

THE sacred writers claim to have been inspired of God. That their claims were just has been proved from the knowledge of the human heart which they possessed; from the sublime doctrines and pure morality they taught; from their harmony; from the prophecies they uttered; the miracles they performed; and the rapid spread of the gospel against all opposing obstacles. I observe,

7. The inspiration of the scriptures appears in the powerful effects they produced. Some of these have been already mentioned; but they deserve a more particular attention.

They have been equally honorable for God and happy for men. They have shown that the scriptures emanated from him, for they have

Repeat the arguments for the inspiration of the scriptures?

conducted back to him, as the Supreme Good. They have purified and transformed the hearts of men, and turned them from their idolatry and wickedness to the service of the living God. With all the stubbornness and rebellion of ancient Israel, the scriptures wrought in them traits of character more amiable and lovely than could be found among any other people on the face of the earth. Their tribes exhibited a spectacle which drew from their enemies the admiring exclamation, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob ! and thy tabernacles, O Israel." Their laws were comparatively mild and salutary ; the poor and unfortunate were treated with compassion ; their judges and magistrates were taught to rule in the fear of God ; their worship was ennobling and elevating ; their temple was filled with the glory of the Lord ; and the people were constrained to serve him in the beauty of holiness.

But it is under the gospel that we perceive more clearly the powerful effects of the scriptures. There we see them casting down imaginations, and every high thing which opposeth

What is said of their effects ? What was the influence of the scriptures upon ancient Israel ?

itself against God ; quickening those who were dead in trespasses and sins, and leaving them to live in all holy conversation and godliness. Wherever the gospel was published the hearts of multitudes were changed. They quit the degrading, criminal practices in which they had before indulged ; and from being fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate abusers of themselves with mankind, and thieves, and covetous, and drunkards, and revilers, and extortioners, they were washed, and sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. “ What fruit,” said the apostle to the disciples at Rome, “ had ye in those things whereof ye are now ashamed ; for the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness.” Look at the converts at Ephesus, who once had their conversation in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others ; but on receiving the gospel, they were created in Christ Jesus unto good works. They

What changes has the gospel wrought in men ? What does the apostle say to the disciples at Rome ?

began to walk in love and to exhibit a character which heaven could approve. Observe the change wrought in Saul of Tarsus. Once he was a blasphemer, and injurious, and a persecutor; but through the power of the gospel he became a meek, devout, and self-denying disciple of Jesus. Such effects have been common where the gospel has been received in its purity, and they have never been produced by any other cause. Human philosophy has never raised men from pollution and guilt, endued them with a humble and contrite spirit, and brought them to hate and shun all iniquity.

Compare the teaching of Socrates with that of the apostle to the Gentiles. The former, at the head of a powerful sect, with all the advantages of popular favor and civil authority to aid in giving effect to the doctrines he delivered, could show none reformed, none rendered more holy, by his instructions. Even his own life presented the debasement, the pollution of idolatry. Paul, in uniting himself with Christians, became an object of general hatred and indignation among the Jews. The rulers sought to

Describe the alteration in Saul of Tarsus. State the comparison between Socrates and Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles.

destroy him ; persecuted in one city, he fled to another ; but he proclaimed the gospel wherever he went, and converts were multiplied. The cords of iniquity were broken, and multitudes, emancipated from the bondage of guilt, put on the Lord Jesus Christ and began to walk in newness of life. Thousands, delivered from abandoned profligacy, from degrading superstition, and mental darkness, were brought into the glorious light and liberty of the gospel ; were constrained to obey its precepts, and manifest in their subsequent lives that it is indeed the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation. What could have occasioned this mighty difference of effect between this prince of heathen philosophers and the disciple of Jesus, except that the latter went forth with a commission from Jehovah to bear his messages to a guilty world, and the hand of the Lord wrought with him.

The gospel is the fire and the hammer which is breaking the rock in pieces. It is bringing the ransomed of the Lord to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. View its influence in the numerous revivals of religion

What is the effect, produced in revivals of religion ?

which are gladdening the face of society ; softening and subduing the hard heart ; rousing the infidel from his false security ; bringing the profane to bow the knee before God in fervent supplication for mercy ; exciting the thoughtless and secure to flee from the wrath to come ; convincing the dissolute that their steps take hold on hell, and leading them to escape for their life ; persuading the young to quit the scenes of gaiety and mirth and learn hosannas to the Son of David ; and overcoming the aged sinner, who had long stood unyielding as the stubborn oak, and braved alike the terrors of the Almighty and the melting compassions of a crucified Redeemer. There is great joy in that city, for the Holy Spirit, the heavenly Dove, comes down to give efficacy to the gospel, and display its blessed effects. “ O ! what an unbending heart must that be, that has witnessed one revival of religion and can still be in doubt whether the bible is the word of the all-powerful and all-gracious God.”

What has occasioned the astonishing difference between Christian and heathen nations ? What has reared in the former, hospitals and almshouses and charitable institutions for the

relief of wretchedness of every kind? what has given personal security; stamped a just value on human life; originated equitable laws, and caused their benign influence to pervade the community? what has given validity to oaths and made them effectual in eliciting truths in courts of justice? what, more than anything else, has strengthened parental affection, and given rise to schools and seminaries of learning, and all the rich variety of means for mental and moral cultivation? It is the bible, extending its silent but powerful influence over society. Turn to the nations destitute of this inestimable treasure, and you see them provided with no antidote to their complicated miseries. Human life is wantonly sacrificed to cruelty and revenge, or thrown away to appease an imaginary deity; the sick and the aged are left to die unpitied; parents are destitute of natural affection and children of filial love; the will of a despot is the only law; all distinction between virtue and vice is confounded; and the whole system of idolatry is calculated to give full strength and

Wherein has the Bible caused Christian and heathen nations to differ? Give some account of the state of the heathen.

scope to all the corrupt propensities of a depraved nature.

Go where the bible has never gone, and you find yourself in the midst of a desert; you seek water and there is none, and your tongue faileth for thirst; you are ready to perish for the bread of life. Travelling onward, a verdant spot meets your eye. It is clothed with freshness and beauty. A fountain is opened; the waters of life flow in a dry and thirsty land. It is a missionary station. The light of heaven dawns upon it; the bible pours forth its treasures, and a little group, gathered out of the world's wide wilderness, are learning the method of salvation through redeeming grace. - The song of Moses and the Lamb echoes through the region of moral death; the desert blossoms as the rose; the heart of savage ferocity is melted into tenderness; and the incense of a humble and holy devotion ascends up before the throne. These are the only bright and cheering spots amidst the immense tracts of moral desolation inhabited by six millions of benighted Pagans.

Would you know the power of the gospel, look at its effects in South Africa. See the

What is said of places, where the Bible has never gone ?

most degraded portion of the human race rising from their savage state, quitting their habits of plunder and rapine, enjoying the comforts of civilization, and walking in all the ordinances of the gospel, blameless. See Africaner, the scourge and terror of half a continent, whose very name filled the stoutest heart with dismay, see this lion of the desert, changed into a lamb, kneeling by the side of the man whose blood he once would have spilled, and pouring out his soul in prayer to the Prince of Peace. See him embracing the missionaries of the cross, and becoming the protector and friend of them who had scarcely dared to cross the country through fear of him.

Go to the islands of the Pacific, and you will see the worship of demons exchanged for that of Jehovah, the rites of a cruel and bloody superstition for the holy services of the Christian Sabbath, and the cries of human victims for the song of redeeming love. You will find government, and order, and piety, and learning, with the delightful train of domestic enjoyments, blessing and animating a people who were

Describe the effects of the gospel in South Africa. What change has the gospel wrought on the islands of the Pacific?

lately sitting in the region and shadow of death.

In short, follow the dear missionary around the earth, and wherever he stops and opens his bible, and preaches Christ and him crucified, there you will discover the meltings of godly sorrow for sin, and a people made ready for the Lord. Is it not manifest that the book which can produce such effects is a revelation from God ?

Consider, further, what would be its effects were its principles universally embraced and practised. Every bad passion would be driven from the human breast, and all the great family of man would love as brethren. Despotism, and cruelty, and slavery would be at an end. Every heavy burden would be unloosed, every yoke of oppression would be broken. Injustice, fraud, and deception would give place to unbending integrity and perfect rectitude in all the business and pursuits of men. The powerful would no longer oppress the weak, nor the artful circumvent the unwary, nor the rich grind the face of the poor. The sword would cease to devour ;

What would be the result, were the principles of the gospel universally embraced and practised ?

the scimitar would rest from its slaughter ; seas would no longer redden and groan beneath the navies of conflicting empires ; cities would cease to be laid in ruins by hostile armies ; the cries of widows and orphans for those who had fallen on the embattled field would be heard no more ; and millions of treasure would be spared to relieve the wants of the destitute and render men holy and happy. The inebriating cup would be dashed from the lips of the intemperate, and neighbors and friends would cease to entice each other to sin. Jehovah would every where be loved with supreme affection. His will would be obeyed with the same intense ardor and delight on earth as it is in heaven. Incense and a pure offering would ascend to him from all the ends of the world. The dwelling of God would be with men. His Spirit would take up his abode in every human heart, producing peace of conscience and joy in the Holy Ghost, and affording an antepast of the felicity of heaven. O how abundant is the evidence that the book which so plainly conducts to the world of purity and bliss came down from the King Eternal who reigns there. Who can doubt, whether the

What are we to infer from this ?

volume suited to afford these results is indeed the word of the living God.

We learn the importance of an early and firm belief in the inspiration of the bible. Such belief will influence the whole life. When you read the sacred page, let it be realized that God is especially present with you, that he addresses you in every line, and you will never fail of being benefitted. I see one who, like Timothy, from a child has known the holy scriptures. I fix my eyes upon him in youth, and see a mighty influence exerted in restraining him from wickedness and forming him to virtue. The violence of passion is repressed; the law of kindness is on his lips; he is modest in his deportment; obedient to parents; a diligent follower of the noble examples set him in the word of God. I see him rising to manhood and shedding a benign, a reforming influence around him. As a citizen, he leads a quiet and peaceful life; as a magistrate, he exhibits an inflexible regard to justice, aiming at the suppression of vice, and the promotion of the public good by promoting public virtue; as a disciple of Jesus, he holds fast the profession of his faith, and will not be

What benefits will flow from an early and firm belief in the Bible?

moved from the foundation of the prophets and apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone. I behold him with dignity and serenity leaning upon his staff, while his hoary locks are whitened with age; he sinks into the grave, and angels convoy his departing spirit to that rest which remaineth to the people of God.

Turning from this bright and cheering prospect, I see another youth who refuses instruction. He has no confidence in the oracles of God, and desires not a knowledge of the truths they inculcate. He is headstrong and impetuous. Hurried away by appetite and passion, he becomes a grief and shame to his parents, and a corrupter of society; his mind is filled with unhallowed thoughts, his lips with profane conversation, and his hands with unrighteous deeds. I see him rising to manhood, living in rebellion against God, and exerting a baneful influence in every relation in life. I follow him until his steps are verging to the grave, and darkness and horror come over his path; his eye sinks in despair; he dies without hope, or with that only which is false and fatal, and is turned into hell with all that forget God. This is not the mere creation of fancy. It is often a solemn reality, bearing testimony to the transcendent importance of early

embracing the truths of the gospel. "Where-with shall a young man cleanse his way?" inquires the Psalmist, and his reply is, "By taking heed thereto according to thy word."

What wisdom is in them who reject the word of the Lord? They refuse to credit the declarations of the God of truth, though supported by the clearest evidence. Every possible proof is afforded which the nature of the case admits. It comes to us from every quarter, from earlier and later times, with a richness and variety indicating the divine determination to leave them without excuse who continue in unbelief. How can they be wise who shut their eyes against the light, and thus manifest a determined opposition to the character and government of God? Their offence is peculiarly and awfully aggravated, for they give the lie to their Maker by refusing to credit his instructions; they trample upon all the attributes of Jehovah unfolded in the volume of inspiration, and set at nought the astonishing condescension and mercy displayed in the system of redemption. What have they to expect who thus abuse their Creator and Re-

How are we to view their offence, who refuse to credit the testimony of God, and give him their hearts?

deemer, but to be treated as enemies to his throne and government, and be made the signal monuments of vindictive justice and coming wrath? "If any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city." Beware how you approach this fatal precipice, by suffering yourselves to deny or distrust the word of the Lord. Shun, as you would the bite of a serpent, the secret, the artful insinuation, which would destroy your confidence in the sacred record. Flee from the presence of the man who ridicules his bible, as you would from the presence of an assassin. He is engaged in the work of destruction, scattering fire-brands, arrows, and death, while he saith, Am I not in sport? He is tearing down the barriers against the floods of iniquity; annihilating the restraints to every bad passion; preparing to deluge society in misery, and plunge immortal souls into the fire which is never quenched. Let the infidel succeed in his attempts to promote universal unbelief, and he will seize your liberties and riot on your substance; he will thrust the dagger into your bosom whenever he thinks it will promote his

interest, or that he can escape conviction of his crime before the civil magistrate. Guard for your life against the company and influence of the wicked who forsake the law of the Lord. They pursue the paths of death, and their steps take hold on hell. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but the companion of fools shall be destroyed."

How unreasonable is it to withhold our belief from any of the doctrines of the bible because we do not fully understand them. Having settled the question that they are from God, there is no alternative, except to receive them with implicit confidence, or venture his eternal displeasure. In a communication from him, who is infinite in all his perfections, who presides over the immense dominions of the universe, whose ways are everlasting, we might reasonably expect to find some things beyond the entire comprehension of finite minds. A revelation from such a being, unfolding his character, purposes, and operations, must necessarily involve mysteries. But many truths which are myste-

rious to a child are not so to a philosopher ; and subjects which are obscure and incomprehensible to men in this imperfect state, may be fully understood by angels and the spirits of the just made perfect. The natural world presents innumerable mysteries, which we are unable to fathom. Tell me how an acorn vegetates, and becomes a spreading oak, or what occasions the variety of colors in the opening blossom. Tell me how the human mind is connected with the body ; how the soul is affected by the organs of sense ; why such vast oceans and immense deserts are found on the earth, and why other large portions of its surface are covered with bleak mountains and barren plains. If you cannot explain these difficulties in the natural world, with which you are continually conversant, how unreasonable will it be to reject the message sent from the high and lofty One, because it contains depths of unfathomable wisdom.

The truths of God are to be received as matters of fact, which are to regulate our affections and guide our conduct. When God reveals his own existence, and teaches us that we are equally dependent on the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, as constituting the adorable Trinity, the

one living and true God. When he declares to us the necessity of regeneration by the Holy Spirit, the sovereignty of his electing love, the freedom and accountability of men, the final resurrection, and eternal state of rewards and punishments, it is to the simple, momentous facts that he demands our implicit faith. The mode of his operations he has never required us to understand. It may be entirely beyond our comprehension, while the truths are essential to teach us our necessities, and what we must do to be saved. Instead of being offended with difficulties, receive with meekness whatever God has seen fit to communicate. Let it be your intense and unceasing prayer that you may know what he has revealed. Plead for the influences of his Spirit to assist your understandings, and pour light upon your darkened minds. Learn to suppress all high thoughts of yourself, and be willing to sit at the feet of Jesus and learn of him. Whoever would come to God, with the hope of acceptance through Christ, must come with meekness and docility, or he will be rejected for his arrogance and presumption. He that leaneth to his own understanding "shall die without instruction, and in the greatness of

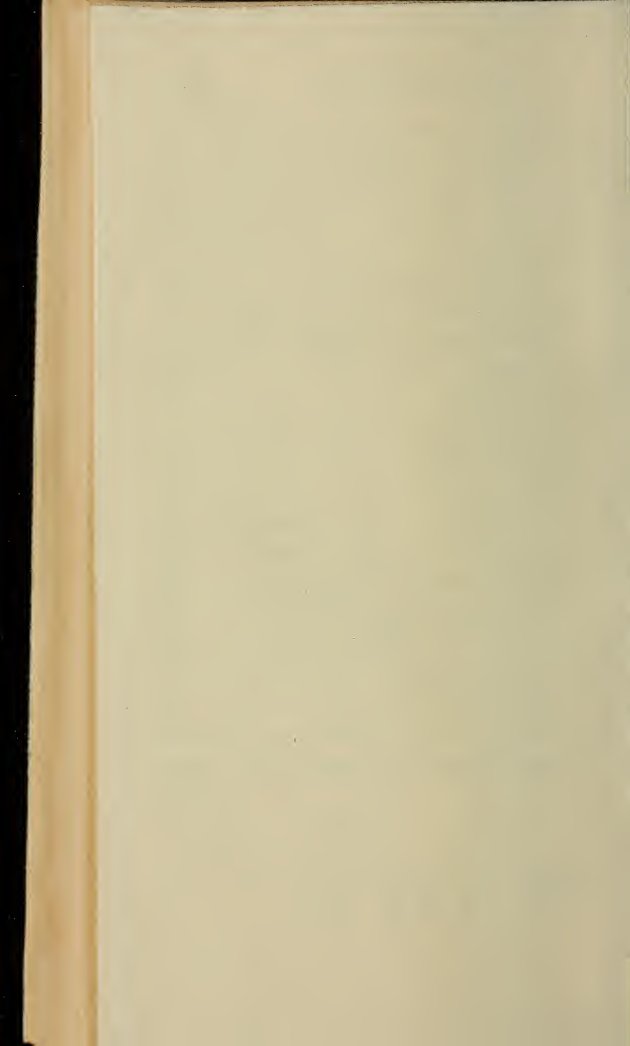
his folly shall he go astray." But the meek will the Lord "guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way. He will beautify the meek with salvation," and increase their joy in believing.

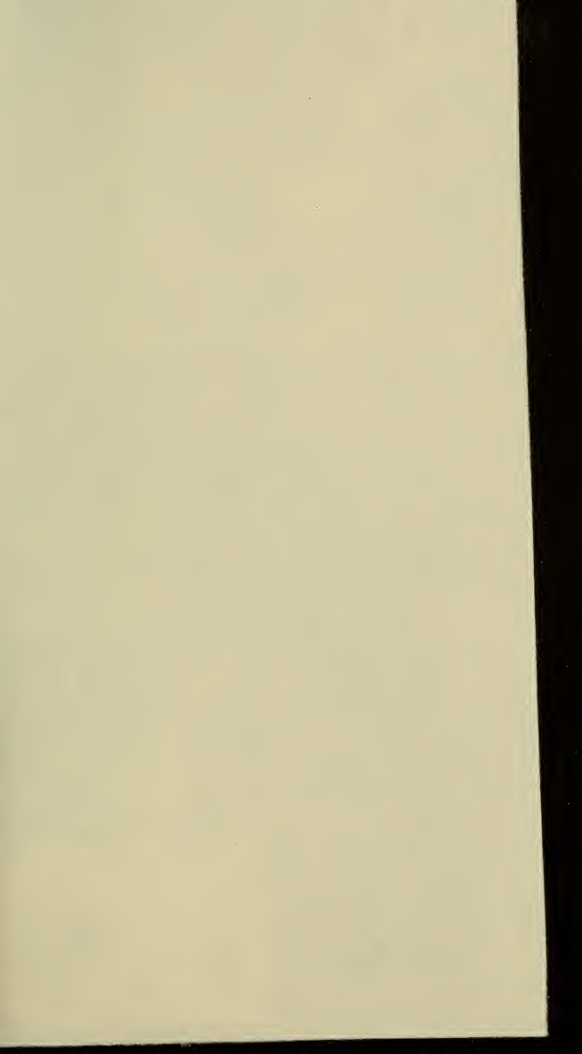
Finally. We see the necessity of immediate repentance and submission to the terms of the gospel. Health and gaiety, thoughtless companions, and the busy scenes of time may conspire to buoy up your spirits now, and exclude the affecting considerations of eternity. But its realities are advancing with rapidity, and often burst upon the secure and inconsiderate in a sudden and surprising manner. No man knoweth his time, and while submission to the gospel is neglected, whether he be young or old, or in the prime and meridian of life, he is liable every moment to be cut off in his sins, and consigned to that world in which the streams of salvation never flow. Dear youth, I beseech you by the melting compassion and dying love of Jesus, by the worth of the soul, and the consideration of its ever-growing felicity, or ever-withering pains, I affectionately beseech you to repent of all your sins, and to seek the Lord with all your heart. You are hastening on the wings of every fleeting

hour to immortal glory and blessedness, or to the weeping and wailing which shall never end ; hastening to rise and participate with angel and seraphim in their enrapturing joys, or plunge in darkness and despair forever. Think of the amount of happiness in that tide of bliss which shall continue to swell during unceasing ages ; and O think too of the billows of anguish which shall roll over a lost immortal, as he sinks deeper and deeper in a pit of wo. Soon, all the affairs of time will be nothing to you, except in the joy or grief which the retrospection will fling across your soul forever. Secure the present moment by immediate repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus. From the throne of his grace he now encourages you to take shelter beneath the banner of his love. He proclaims in the most endearing, inviting accents, "I love them that love me ; and those that seek me early shall find me." O give him now the first fruits of your affections, and raise your anxious cry to Jehovah Jesus, "My Father, be thou the guide of my youth."

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